

## 11 EGY 1 - 11-01-01 Alexandrie

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Segment horizontal du quadrillage  $\approx$  50 km.

<http://www.tsr.ch/info/monde/2851461-un-attentat-a-fait-au-moins-21-morts-et-79-blesses-devant-une-eglise-copte-d-alexandrie-en-egypte.html>

### Un attentat a fait au moins 21 morts et 79 blessés devant une église copte d'Alexandrie, en Egypte

01.01.2011 12:43 - mise à jour: 22:01

Une bombe puissante a explosé tôt samedi matin devant une église copte à Alexandrie en Egypte, alors que les quelque 1000 fidèles présents sortaient de la messe. L'attentat a fait au moins 21 morts et 79 blessés. L'attaque n'a pas été revendiquée, mais, selon le gouverneur de la cité, elle porte la marque d'Al-Qaïda. La thèse d'un véhicule piégé garé près de l'église avait d'abord été évoquée, mais il s'agirait finalement plutôt d'une explosion déclenchée par un kamikaze. Peu après, des échauffourées ont opposé chrétiens et musulmans, puis des chrétiens et des policiers anti-émeutes.

Le président Hosni Moubarak a promis que les auteurs de l'attaque seraient retrouvés et que leurs mains seraient "coupées". Soucieux d'éviter les divisions religieuses, il a estimé que l'attentat visait "toute l'Egypte". Le pape Benoît XVI a critiqué l'intolérance religieuse et a exhorté les dirigeants à promouvoir la paix. Le président Nicolas Sarkozy et le roi marocain Mohammed VI ont condamné l'attaque. Cet attentat intervient 2 mois après des menaces

proférées par Al-Qaïda contre les coptes d'Egypte. Ces chrétiens, qui constituent 10% de la population égyptienne, s'estiment discriminés.

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?subjectid=298&articleid=20110101\\_298\\_0\\_ALEXAN957160](http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/article.aspx?subjectid=298&articleid=20110101_298_0_ALEXAN957160)

## Bomb hits Egypt church at New Year's Mass, 21 dead



A Coptic protester, center-left, prepares to hurl an object at riot police during clashes between Coptic youths and riot police, who opened fire with rubber bullets and tear gas, in the streets outside the Saints Church and a neighboring hospital, in Alexandria, Egypt, Saturday. A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role. (AP Photo/Ben Curtis)



Two Coptic men, center and unseen, warn off two others wielding kitchen knives, left and right, who were trying to kick down the doors of a mosque, seen behind, during heavy clashes between Coptic youths and riot police, in the streets outside the Saints Church and a neighboring hospital, in Alexandria, Egypt, Saturday. A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role. (AP Photo/Ben Curtis)

By MAGGIE MICHAEL Associated Press

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ALEXANDRIA, Egypt — A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role.

The attack came in the wake of threats by al-Qaida militants in Iraq to attack Egypt's Christians. A direct al-Qaida hand in the bombing would be a dramatic development, as the government of President Hosni Mubarak has long denied that the terror network has a significant presence in the country. Al-Qaida in Iraq has already been waging a campaign of violence against Christians in that country.

The bombing enraged Christians, who often complain of discrimination at the hands of Egypt's Muslim majority and accuse the government of covering up attacks on their community. In heavy clashes Saturday afternoon, crowds of Christian youths in the streets outside the church and a neighboring hospital hurled stones at riot police, who opened fire with rubber bullets and tear gas.

Egypt has seen growing tensions between its Muslim majority and Christian minority — and the attack raised a dangerous new worry, that al-Qaida or militants sympathetic to it could be aiming to stoke sectarian anger or exploit it to gain a foothold.

Nearly 1,000 Christians were attending the New Year's Mass at the Saints Church in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, said Father Mena Adel, a priest at the church. The service had just ended, and some worshippers were leaving the building when the bomb went off about a half hour after midnight, he said.

"The last thing I heard was a powerful explosion and then my ears went deaf," Marco Boutros, a 17-year-old survivor, said from his hospital bed. "All I could see were body parts scattered all over — legs and bits of flesh."

Blood splattered the facade of the church, as well as a mosque directly across the street. Bodies of many of the dead were collected from the street and kept inside the church overnight before they were taken away Saturday by ambulances for burial.

Some Christians carried white sheets with the sign of the cross emblazoned on them with what appeared to be the blood of the victims.

Health Ministry official Osama Abdel-Moneim said the death toll stood at 21, with 79 wounded. It was not immediately known if all the victims were Christians. It was the deadliest violence involving Christians in Egypt since at least 20 people, mostly Christians, were killed in sectarian clashes in a southern town in 1999.

Police initially said the blast came from an explosives-packed vehicle parked about four meters (yards) from the church.

But the Interior Ministry said later it was likely the blast was detonated by a suicide bomber and that the attack probably involved "foreign elements." It said there was no sign the epicenter of the blast was from a car. Around six severely damaged vehicles remained outside

the church, but there was little sign of a crater that major car bombs usually cause. Bits of flesh were stuck to nearby walls.

Alexandria governor Adel Labib immediately blamed al-Qaida, pointing to recent threats by the terror group to attack Christians in Egypt. Both car bombs and suicide attackers are hallmark tactics of al-Qaida.

Whoever was behind it, the blast appeared qualitatively different from past attacks on Christians. Most recent anti-Christian violence has involved less sophisticated means, mainly shootings. Stabbings at three Alexandria churches in 2006 sparked three days of Muslim-Christian riots that left at least four dead.

Egypt faced a wave of Islamic militant violence in the 1990s, that peaked with a 1997 massacre of nearly 60 tourists at a Pharaonic temple in Luxor. But the government suppressed the insurgency with a fierce crackdown.

The last major terror attacks in Egypt were between 2004-2006, when bombings — including some by suicide attackers — hit three tourist resorts in the Sinai peninsula, killing 125 people. Those attacks raised allegations of an al-Qaida role, but the governments strongly denied a connection, blaming them on local extremists.

Hours after the blast, Mubarak went on state TV and vowed to track down those behind the attack, saying "we will cut off the hands of terrorists and those plotting against Egypt's security."

Aiming to prevent sectarian divisions, he said it was attack against "all Egypt" and that "terrorism does not distinguish between Copt and Muslim." Egypt's top Muslim leaders also expressed their condolences and unity with Christians.

But Christians at the church unleashed their fury at authorities they often accuse of failing to protect them. Soon after the explosion, angry Christians clashed with police, chanting, "With our blood and soul, we redeem the cross," witnesses said. Some broke in to the nearby mosque, throwing books into the street and sparking stone- and bottle-throwing clashes with Muslims, an AP photographer at the scene said.

Police fired tear gas to break up the clashes. But in the afternoon, new violence erupted in a street between the church and the affiliated Saints Hospital. Some of the young protesters waved kitchen knives. One, his chest bared and a large tattoo of a cross on his arm, was carried into the hospital with several injuries from rubber bullets.

"Now it's between Christians and the government, not between Muslims and Christians," shouted one Christian woman at the hospital.

Many Christians blame violence against their community on Islamic extremists. They accuse the government of blaming attacks on lone renegades or mentally ill people to avoid addressing what they call anti-Christian sentiment among Muslims. The mistrust of the government is so great, that even the ministry's report that a suicide bomber was behind Saturday's blast raised suspicion among some Christians.

Archbishop Raweis, the top Coptic cleric in Alexandria, said police want to blame a suicide bomber instead of a car bomb so they can write it off as a lone attacker. He denounced what he called a lack of protection.

"There were only three soldiers and an officer in front of the church. Why did they have so little security at such a sensitive time when there's so many threats coming from al-Qaida?" he said, speaking to the AP.

Christians, mainly Orthodox Copts, are believed to make up about 10 percent of Egypt's mainly Muslim population of nearly 80 million people, and they have grown increasingly vocal in complaints about discrimination. In November, hundreds of Christians rioted in the capital, Cairo, smashing cars and windows after police violently stopped the construction of a church. The rare outbreak of Christian unrest in the capital left one person dead.

Just before Christmas, al-Qaida in Iraq made its latest threat to attack Christians. The group claims to be waging its anti-Christian campaign in the name of two Egyptian Christian women who reportedly converted to Islam in order to get divorces, which are prohibited by the Coptic Church.

The women have since been secluded by the Church, prompting Islamic hard-liners to hold frequent protests in past months, accusing the Church of imprisoning the women and forcing them to renounce Islam, a claim the Church denies.

By MAGGIE MICHAEL Associated Press

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<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/2980/Egypt/Politics-/Police-and-Coptic-protestors-clash-in-Alexandria.aspx>

## **Police and Coptic protestors clash in Alexandria**

Yasmine Fathi and Salma El-Wardani in Alexandria, Saturday 1 Jan 2011

Several demonstrations erupted in Alexandria today following the devastating bombing of the Saints church

Protestors, outraged by the horrific bombing attack on the Saints church, in the Alexandria district of Sidi Bishr, clashed with police near Mar Girgis hospital, where the injured from the blast are being hospitalized. Injured demonstrators could be seen near the hospital and several suffered suffocation as a result of tear gas canisters hurled by anti-riot police in order to disperse the demonstration.

Eyewitnesses say some protestors were injured.

Family members leaving the hospital told Ahram Online they had just lost their relatives, who died of their injuries in hospital.

Meanwhile, a few thousand demonstrators gathered in the area of Mar Morcos, where the bombed church and the Mari Girgis hospital are located, chanting "Muslims and Christians will not be disunited", protestors told Ahram Online that they are residents of the area, and do not belong to any specific group or organization.

Torkeya Abdelsalam, one of the demonstrators and a Muslim, said she lives near the Saints church and has witnessed the explosion. AbdelSalam said, "this is not Islam," and that she was taking part in the protest to demonstrate this.

However, there were also clashes between Copts and Muslims, in the area. Some media reports suggest that a dozen were injured in these clashes, which police succeeded in ending shortly after they began.

January 4, 2011

## **Clashes Grow as Egyptians Remain Angry After an Attack**

By LIAM STACK and MICHAEL SLACKMAN

CAIRO — Thousands of angry rioters broke through police lines, pelting officers with rocks and bottles and beating them with makeshift wooden crosses in a third day of unrest set off by a bomb blast outside a church after a New Year's Mass, which killed 21 and wounded about 100.

The fighting broke out late Monday in the densely packed neighborhood of Shoubra, home to many of Cairo's Christians, when a crowd of hundreds of angry protesters suddenly swelled into the thousands and surged through the winding streets. Eventually, the throng — chanting "Where were you when they attacked Alex?" and "Oh Mubarak, you villain, Coptic blood is not cheap," referring to President Hosni Mubarak — began battling with the police, who dropped their batons and shields to throw rocks and bottles back at the protesters. It was the second time in two nights that the police in Cairo, outnumbered and overwhelmed by protesters, broke ranks and attacked the crowd. Even before the outbreak on Monday night, at least 39 riot police officers, including four high-ranking officers, had been injured trying to contain the protests.

Egyptian authorities seemed uncertain at every level of how to contain the civil unrest unleashed by the bombing, outside Saints Church in Alexandria. They focused on the forensics, identifying 18 of the victims — 10 women and 8 men — and were examining a decapitated head thought to be that of a suicide bomber. The authorities also said they had detained suspects they believed could lead them to those responsible for the bombing. By nightfall, church officials announced that every church in the country — including Saints Church — would go ahead and hold a Coptic Christmas Mass on Thursday night, but that holiday celebrations would be canceled, according to an official Egyptian news service.

Outside of Shoubra, the nation remained tense, with fears that the conflict could lead to wider civil unrest between Muslims and Christians. Rumors spread throughout Cairo that Christians pelted Muslim religious leaders with rocks when they went to offer condolences to church officials. With tempers heating up, police forces tightened security around the country. But many Egyptians said that the state's oppressive security apparatus was itself the cause of much of the trouble. "The government is the reason this happened," said a demonstrator, Mamdouh Mikheil. "They are the terrorists who attack us every day."

At one point earlier in the day, as a small group of protesters marched through the center of Cairo, a high-ranking state security officer walked over to a row of demonstrators standing vigil and slowly, methodically blew out the white candles they were holding to remember those who died.

It was a small yet telling moment for a Christian community that feels increasingly victimized and marginalized, first by a series of deadly attacks and then by a government that resists acknowledging that the nation is torn by growing conflict between its Muslim majority and its Christian minority, according to political experts here.

“Do not say that the criminal terrorists are not Egyptian,” wrote Samir Farid, in the independent daily newspaper Al Masry Al Youm, echoing a theme emphasized across nearly every daily newspaper on Monday. “They are Egyptian Muslims who are putting the nation on one hand and Islam on the other, and favoring the hand of Islam over the nation.”

It was not all dire, however. There was a glimmer of hope, some observers said, that this attack, so lethal and abhorrent to so many Egyptians, would reinforce Egypt’s deeply felt sense of nationhood, which has traditionally trumped identification by tribe or religion.

As protesters marched through downtown Cairo toward Talat Harb Square, where they were vastly outnumbered by riot police officers in black uniforms wielding truncheons, they chanted “Down with Mubarak” and “Down with the military state.” But they also carried signs with slogans like, “Egyptians are one people” and “Citizenship is the way out from the slide into sectarianism.”

This attack has so shaken the nation that for the first time in recent memory, there has been a torrent of support for the Christian community within the national news media — and a direct challenge to the government’s narrative, which tends to overlook the tense backdrop of interfaith relations.

“They want there to be no more Copts in Egypt, but it’s not going to happen,” said one of the demonstrators, Lotfy Fahmi, referring to Muslim militants. “This is our country, and we want our rights.”

“Stop playing with words, stop fooling us, stop lying,” wrote Belal Fadl in Al Masry Al Youm. “How many victims are necessary in order for you to take responsibility and realize that we are before a matter of life or death for this country? Do not lie to yourselves and to us with your big words. The Alexandria massacre was targeted at Egyptian Christians.” The bomb blast recalled a similar, if less deadly attack last year in Nag Hammadi. In that episode, a gunman opened fire on congregants as they filed into the streets after a Coptic Christmas Mass, killing several people. The security services insisted that the shooting was a revenge attack and not the result of sectarian strife, though they noted that it was revenge tied to accusations that a Christian man raped a Muslim girl.

This time the government has said it appears the attack was at least inspired by Al Qaeda, and the government claims that there is evidence of a foreign element in the planning. That is a claim, however, that disappoints many here, who see it as a way for the government to evade the issue of growing sectarian divisions. Mr. Mubarak’s unusually rapid response to the shooting, with a televised national address, did little to calm that grievance, people here said. “So far Mubarak’s televised speech seems to have been retrieved from a database in the ’90s where this is portrayed as an individual criminal act, without offering any context,” said Hossam Bahgat, executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights. “The message the Coptic community has been trying to send very loudly over the past few days is that they are angry as much about the attacks on New Year’s Day as about the injustices they have been subjected to.”



Liam Stack reported from Cairo, and Michael Slackman from Berlin. Mona El-Naggar contributed reporting from Cairo.

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<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=132659040>

## **Anti-Christian Drumbeat Loud Before Egypt Attack**

by The Associated Press



Associated Press

Worshippers shout around an exploded car in front of a Coptic Christian church in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, Egypt, early Saturday Jan. 1, 2011. The car exploded in front of the church as worshippers emerged from a New Year's Mass in the Mediterranean port city early Saturday, killing at least seven people, officials said.



Associated Press

Angry Copts chant anti-government slogans during a protest before clashing with Egyptian riot police in Cairo, Egypt, late Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. The head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church appealed to the government on Monday to address Christians complaints about discrimination to ease tensions as fierce riots broke out in the capital following a New Year's Day church bombing that killed 21 people.





Associated Press

Two Copts, left and right, fight with another man, center, who onlookers claimed was a Muslim, prior to clashes between Coptic youths and riot police, who later opened fire with rubber bullets and tear gas, in the streets outside the Saints Church and a neighboring hospital, in Alexandria, Egypt, Saturday, Jan. 1, 2011. A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role.



Associated Press

Two Coptic men, center and unseen, warn off two others wielding kitchen knives, left and right, who were trying to kick down the doors of a mosque, seen behind, during heavy clashes between Coptic youths and riot police, in the streets outside the Saints Church and a neighboring hospital, in Alexandria, Egypt, Saturday, Jan. 1, 2011. A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role.



Associated Press

An Egyptian Coptic Christian woman, right, weeps underneath the broken remains of a sign celebrating "2011", following morning mass inside the Saints Church in Alexandria, Egypt, Sunday, Jan. 2, 2011. Grieving Christians, many clad in black, were back praying Sunday in the blood-spattered church where 21 worshippers were killed in an apparent suicide bombing, feeling betrayed by a government they say has not done enough to keep them safe.



Associated Press

Relatives try to waken Egyptian Coptic Christian Ahlam Fawzy Saber, below-left, who lost two of her sisters and a niece in the blast, after she fainted from emotion following morning mass inside the Saints Church in Alexandria, Egypt, Sunday, Jan. 2, 2011. Grieving Christians, many clad in black, were back praying Sunday in the blood-spattered church where 21 worshippers were killed in an apparent suicide bombing, feeling betrayed by a government they say has not done enough to keep them safe.



Associated Press

Egyptian Muslims and Christians raise a copy of the Quran and a Cross in Shubra district of Cairo, Egypt, late Saturday, Jan.1, 2011 to protest against the terrorist attack on a church of Alexandria. A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role.



Associated Press

Egyptian Christians carry an injured woman after a car explosion in front of a Coptic Christian church in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, Egypt, early Saturday Jan. 1, 2011. The attack killed at least seven people, officials said.



Associated Press

FILE - In this Nov. 8, 2010 file photo, Egyptian Coptic activists light candles and hold flowers during a protest against the October al-Qaida militant attack on a Baghdad church, in front of the Iraqi embassy in Cairo, Egypt. In the weeks before the New Year's Day suicide bombing of an Egyptian church, al-Qaida-linked Islamic militant websites were carrying a how-to manual on "destroying the cross," featuring video lessons on bomb-making, addresses of churches in Egypt to attack and advice to strike during holidays.



Associated Press

FILE - In this Nov. 5, 2010 file photo, hundreds of Egyptian Muslims gather following prayers outside Ibrahim Mosque in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, Egypt, protesting against what they allege was Egypt's Coptic Church holding two women captive for converting to Islam. In the weeks before the New Year's Day suicide bombing of an Egyptian church, al-Qaida-linked Islamic militant websites were carrying a how-to manual on "destroying the cross," featuring video lessons on bomb-making, addresses of churches in Egypt to attack and advice to strike during holidays. Among the churches suggested as targets was the same Saints Church in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria that was hit by the bomber, killing 21 people.



Associated Press

An Egyptian Coptic Christian woman, center-left, cries out in emotion as a Coptic Christian man, center-right, expresses his anger following morning mass inside the Saints Church in Alexandria, Egypt, Sunday, Jan. 2, 2011. Grieving Christians, many clad in black, were back praying Sunday in the blood-spattered church where 21 worshippers were killed in an apparent suicide bombing, feeling betrayed by a government they say has not done enough to keep them safe.

Angry Copts carry a picture of Jesus Christ and chant anti government slogans during a protest before clashing with Egyptian riot police, unseen in Cairo, Egypt late Monday, Jan. 3, 2011. The head of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church appealed to the government on Monday to address Christians complaints about discrimination to ease tensions as fierce riots broke out in the capital following a New Year's Day church bombing that killed 21 people.





Associated Press

Egyptian Christians grieve in front of coffins containing the victims of a car bomb explosion which took place in front of a church in the port city of Alexandria, Egypt, Saturday Jan. 1, 2011. A powerful bomb, possibly from a suicide attacker, exploded in front of a Coptic Christian church as a crowd of worshippers emerged from a New Years Mass early Saturday, killing at least 21 people and wounding nearly 80 in an attack that raised suspicions of an al-Qaida role.

*CAIRO January 4, 2011, 09:29 pm ET*

In the weeks before the New Year's Day suicide bombing of an Egyptian church, al-Qaida-linked websites carried a how-to manual on "destroying the cross," complete with videos on how to build a bomb and the locations of churches to target — including the one that was attacked.

They may have found a receptive audience in Alexandria, where increasingly radicalized Islamic hard-liners have been holding weekly anti-Christian demonstrations, filled with venomous slogans against the minority community.

The blast, which struck Saturday as worshippers were leaving midnight Mass at the Mediterranean city's Saints Church, killed 21 people.

President Hosni Mubarak has accused foreign groups of being behind the attack, which has sparked a wave of angry protests by Christians in Egypt.

But on the ground, investigators are searching in a different direction — scrutinizing homegrown hard-liners, known as Salafis, and the possibility they were inspired by al-Qaida.

Only two or three days before Saturday's bombing, police arrested several Salafis spreading fliers in Alexandria calling for violence against Christians, a security official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

According to authorities, the strong belief among investigators is that local extremists who knew the area and the nature of their target were behind the blast. The Egyptian weekly *Al-Youm Al-Saba* said police were examining photos of the Salafis' weekly protests for suspects.

In the weeks before the attack, al-Qaida militants on the Web spewing calls for "jihad," or holy war, on Egypt's Christians laid out everything anyone would need to carry out a bombing.

One widely circulated posting includes a so-called "Jihadi Encyclopedia for the Destruction of the Cross," with a series of 10 videos describing how to build a bomb.

In the videos, an unidentified militant in a white lab coat and a black mask is shown listing the ingredients to make TNT and mixing up the chemicals in beakers.

The site lists Coptic Christian churches in Egypt, along with phone numbers and addresses — including Alexandria's Saints Church. "Blow up the churches while they are celebrating Christmas or any other time when the churches are packed," it says.

Security officials say they were aware of the online "how-to manual" before the church bombing and are examining any links between it and the material posted on Islamic websites.

One main Salafi group, the Salafi Movement in Alexandria, issued a statement condemning the bombing, saying its preachings "reject such practices."

The ultra-conservative Salafi ideology has been gaining followers throughout Egypt in recent years, preaching a return to the ways of early Muslims. It calls for strict segregation of the sexes and rejection of any religious "innovations," such as permitting boys and girls to attend school together or collecting interest on bank loans.

The movement has spread across class lines, among wealthy businessmen, the middle class and urban poor. Men grow long beards and shave off mustaches, to imitate the Prophet Muhammad. Women wear the black niqab robes and veil, which envelop the entire body and face, showing only the eyes.

In many ways, it resembles the doctrine of al-Qaida, with one major difference — while it advocates jihad against "foreign occupiers" in Iraq or Afghanistan, it rejects holy war inside Egypt, at least for now.

But many observers warn that some members are growing more radicalized and have begun to advocate jihad within the country, providing fertile ground for al-Qaida influence.

They cite the group's unprecedentedly fierce campaign against Egypt's Coptic Christian Church.

It was sparked by the case of two Christian women who reportedly converted to Islam to get divorces from their husbands, since the church bans divorce. The Salafis accuse church officials of forcing the women to renounce Islam and return to Christianity, a claim the church denies.

At weekly protests attended by hundreds outside mosques in Alexandria and Cairo, Salafis have accused the church of holding the women against their will. Vowing vengeance and denouncing Coptic Pope Shenouda III as an "infidel," the protesters accused Copts of trying to "Christianize" Egypt's Muslims and stockpiling weapons in churches and monasteries.

In September, one Salafi cleric, Ahmed Farid, wept as he told worshippers at an Alexandria mosque that Muslims were being "humiliated" by Christians, chiding them for "giving up jihad."

At a Salafi protest in Cairo in October, some raised the flag of al-Qaida in Iraq — a black banner emblazoned with the phrase "there is no god but God and Muhammad is God's prophet."

Two days later, al-Qaida in Iraq attacked a church in Baghdad in a siege that left 68 Christians dead, the worst attack ever against Iraq's Christian minority. The group issued a statement vowing a campaign against Christians unless the two women in Egypt were freed, and several other attacks on the community in Baghdad have followed.

Since then, calls on al-Qaida-linked websites for attacks on Egypt's Christians have grown to a fever pitch.

A statement posted with the videos decries the failure of Muslims to act to free the two women.

"Will we keep on dreaming and dreaming, or is it time to wake up to the echoing boom and the flying torn limbs that will please the faithful and scare the infidels?" the statement reads. "Of course, it is better to act as a group, but that must not be an impediment between you and action. ... Move forward on your own."

The threats raise the question of why security officials did not do more to protect churches. On New Year's, Saints Church had only three or four policemen outside and cars had easy access to the street.

Copts, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's nearly 80 million people, accuse the government of ignoring threats against them and doing nothing about growing anti-Christian sentiment.

Experts say the government has tacitly allowed the growth of Salafism because it is not anti-government and does not get involved in Egypt's politics, as opposed to the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, which is the regime's main political rival.

"The Egyptian regime is harvesting the sour fruits for letting this extremist thought to grow and recruit thousands of young Egyptians," said Rifaat Sayyed Ahmed, an expert on Islamic groups.

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<http://af.reuters.com/article/egyptNews/idAFLDE70307620110104?sp=true>

## **FACTBOX-Sectarian violence in Egypt**

Tue Jan 4, 2011 6:11pm GMT

Jan 4 (Reuters) - The New Year's day bombing of a church suggests al Qaeda-inspired militants have a toe-hold in Egypt, although it probably does not indicate a return to the kind of Islamist insurgency Egyptian forces crushed in the 1990s.

Whoever was behind it, the attack seemed designed to upset the fragile balance between the Muslim majority and the Coptic Christians who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's 79 million people, the largest Christian minority in the Middle East.



Here are details of past sectarian violence between the two communities in Egypt:

Jan. 1, 2011 -- A suspected suicide bomber hits a church in Alexandria as Christians celebrate the new year, killing 23 people. Christians take to the streets in protest. Some Christians and Muslims pelt each other with stones. Police fire tear gas to disperse protesters.

Nov 24, 2010 -- Clashes between riot police and hundreds of Christians angry at a decision to halt construction of a church takes a sectarian turn as dozens of Muslims join the violence. Two Christians are killed and more than 150 people detained.

Nov. 1, 2010 -- The Islamic State of Iraq, an al Qaeda affiliated group that attacked a Baghdad church, vows to carry out attacks on Christians in Egypt, where it says Coptic women who convert to Islam are mistreated.

April 11, 2010 -- The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights issues a report saying the number of cases of sectarian violence rose between 2008 and 2009 and calls for the prosecution of offenders to prevent a further escalation.

Jan. 6, 2010 -- Six Christians and a Muslim policeman are killed in a drive-by shooting on the eve of the Orthodox Coptic Christmas outside a church in the southern town of Nagaa Hamady. The shooting leads to protests. Some Christian and Muslim homes and shops are set ablaze in the violence.

May 10, 2009 -- A small homemade bomb explodes near a church in Cairo but no one is hurt, security sources say. The device damages a car and a second one is found and detonated by police in the same area in the northeast of the capital, sources say.

April 16, 2006 -- A man attacks worshippers in two churches in Alexandria with a knife during Mass, killing one person and wounding five. Officials say the attacker, who was arrested while trying to enter a third church, was mentally ill.

Dec. 31 1999 -- 21 Christians are killed in two days of violence sparked by a quarrel between a Christian merchant and a Muslim customer in al-Kosheh in Upper Egypt. More than 40 people are injured.

August 1998 -- Two Copts are murdered in al-Kosheh by Islamist extremists. Media say they were avenging a poisoning.

February 1997 -- Ten Christians are killed in a church in Abu Qurqas in the south. Officials blame al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, which is trying to establish a strict Islamic state.

May 4, 1992 -- A gunfight leaves 13 Christians and a Muslim dead in Mansheit Nasser, a village in south Egypt. The government blames "extremist elements" for exploiting a vendetta between two families over a house purchase.

June 17, 1981 -- Violence erupts in the Cairo district of al-Zawya al-Hamra. Estimates of the dead range widely from 17 to more than 80 with hundreds injured, prompting President Anwar Sadat to detain Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda in a monastery. (Compiled by Sarah Mikhail and Edmund Blair in Cairo; Editing by Peter Graff)

January 5, 2011

## **Coptic Christians face riot police in Cairo**

Posted: 1245 GMT

Hundreds of security officers in riot gear herded supporters of Coptic Christians down the streets of Shubra, a suburb of Cairo yesterday. The Copts and their Muslim supporters expressed outrage over a New Year's bombing outside the Coptic Church of the Two Saints in Alexandria that killed at least 21 and wounded 97 others.

The bombed church had been listed as a threatened target on the al Qaeda affiliated web site, Shumukh al Islam website. The website lists other Coptic churches in Egypt and in Europe, advising bombers to strike on January 7, when the churches will be crowded for the Coptic celebration of Christmas. Copts are adherents to an Egyptian sect of Christianity and make up about 9% of Egypt's population. A suicide bomber was believed to be behind the blast, which left the church littered with broken glass and debris and the walls spattered with blood.



Photo: Ian Lee/CNN



Photo: Ian Lee/CNN



Photo: Ian Lee/CNN

## Des centaines de chrétiens manifestent au Caire

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LE CAIRE, Égypte - Des centaines de chrétiens ont manifesté, mercredi soir, près d'un grand bidonville du Caire, bloquant une importante autoroute et affrontant la police pour dénoncer le traitement réservé aux membres de leur communauté en Égypte.

Le manifestation a eu lieu au lendemain d'une fusillade dans un train qui a coûté la vie à un chrétien, et après l'attentat suicide devant une église copte d'Alexandrie qui a tué 21 personnes les 1er janvier.

L'attentat a déclenché trois jours d'émeutes. Le plus récent incident risque de donner lieu à une nouvelle série de manifestations de cette minorité, qui constitue dix pour cent des quelque 80 millions d'habitants du pays.

Les manifestants ont lancé des pierres aux policiers et ont bloqué l'autoroute qui court le long de Manshiyet Nasr, un bidonville de 1,2 million d'habitants situé près des cimetières médiévaux de la ville, où vit notamment une communauté chrétienne spécialisée dans le ramassage et le recyclage des ordures.

Trois policiers et cinq agents anti-émeute ont été blessés, et plusieurs de leurs véhicules ont été endommagés, selon un responsable de la sécurité ayant requis l'anonymat.

Aucun blessé parmi les manifestants n'a été rapporté dans l'immédiat. La police a indiqué que la manifestation s'était finalement apaisée.

Cette démonstration est survenue après les funérailles, mercredi dans un quartier du nord-est du Caire, d'un chrétien de 71 ans victime d'une fusillade dans un train. Des centaines de policiers anti-émeute ont encerclé l'église dans laquelle a eu lieu une cérémonie émouvante, selon des médias égyptiens.

Lors de l'attaque de mardi, un policier qui n'était pas en service est monté à bord d'un train dans le sud de l'Égypte et a tiré sur des chrétiens, faisant un mort et cinq blessés. L'assaillant a été arrêté.

On ne sait pas très bien si l'homme savait que ses cibles étaient des chrétiens. Mais quatre des cinq blessés sont des femmes, qui se sont probablement démarquées par le fait qu'elles ne portaient pas de foulard sur la tête, comme le font les musulmanes.

Plusieurs chrétiens d'Égypte estiment que les autorités n'en font pas assez pour les protéger et vont même jusqu'à affirmer que certains services de sécurité ferment les yeux sur les incidents visant des chrétiens.

L'attaque du Nouvel An devant une église d'Alexandrie a rouvert de vieilles blessures dans la

communauté chrétienne d'Égypte, dont les membres se sentent comme des citoyens de seconde classe dans leur pays à cause de la discrimination répandue à laquelle ils font face.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article1089440.ece>

## Hundreds of Christians demonstrate on Cairo's edge



Eman Fathi Mossad Habib, the daughter of a 71-year-old Christian man who was killed when an off-duty policeman boarded a train and opened fire late Tuesday in southern Egypt, grieves as she is hugged by a Muslim neighbor, left, during a funeral service at a Cairo church on Wednesday. Photo: AP.

Hundreds of Christians demonstrated late Wednesday near a large Cairo slum, blocking a major highway and clashing with police following the shooting death of a Christian man the day before, said a security official.

The demonstrators were protesting the treatment of Christians in the country in the wake of Tuesday's shooting and a New Year's Day suicide bombing of a church in the port city of Alexandria, which killed 21 worshippers.

The bombing prompted three days of riots by Christians and now the recent shooting is threatening to set off a new round of demonstrations by the disaffected minority which makes up 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million.

The protesters pelted police with stones and blocked the Autostrad highway running along the edge of Manshiyet Nasr, a slum of 1.2 million near the city's medieval cemeteries, that includes a population of Christians specialized in gathering and recycling the city's garbage.

Three officers and five riot police were wounded and several of their vehicles were damaged, the security official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

There was no immediate word on civilian casualties, but police report the demonstrators eventually calmed down.

The demonstrations come after Wednesday's funeral in a northeast Cairo neighbourhood for the 71-year-old victim of the train shooting. Hundreds of riot police surrounded the Cairo church where an emotional ceremony was held, according to the local media.

In Tuesday's attack, an off duty police officer boarded a train in southern Egypt and shot dead one man and wounded five other Christians. The attacker was later apprehended.

It was not immediately clear whether the gunman knew his targets were Christians. But four of the five wounded were Christian women who stand out in the conservative south as they would probably not have been wearing headscarves as most Muslim women do.

Shooting attacks against Christians occasionally take place in Egypt's impoverished south, usually over commercial disputes, church building or allegations of cross-sectarian relationships.

In January 2010, gunmen opened fire on worshippers leaving a Coptic Christmas Eve church service in southern Egypt, killing six Christians and a Muslim guard.

Many Christians charge that the authorities are not doing enough to protect them and in fact allege some members of the security services turn a blind eye to anti-Christian incidents.

The New Year's suicide attack on the church reopened long festering wounds in a Christian community that says its members feel like second class citizens in their own country due to widespread discrimination.