

Jihadist holds hostages in Sydney café, forces them to raise black IS flag

Sydney (Australia), December 15 /MCN/

A jihadist took a number of people hostage Monday inside a café in the city of Sydney and forced some of them to raise the black flag, taken as a banner by the Islamic State, from the café window.

According to media and witnesses, more than 30 people are being held hostage in the Lindt cafe in Martin Square, in the central business area in Sydney. Five hostages, including three men and two women, managed to get out amid intense police surveillance. It is unclear yet if they escaped or were released.

Sky News Australia reported that the captor telephoned three media outlets from the phones of the hostages and asked for the IS flag. He also telephoned Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

More than 40 Islamic organizations in Australia condemned the hostage-taking by armed Islamist elements inside the Sydney café.

“We reject any attempt to harm the lives of innocent people, or instil fear and terror in their hearts,” the organizations said in a statement on Monday.

The gunmen forced some hostages to raise the black banner of jihad from the windows of the café, located in a famous district that includes major government and financial institutions as well as media institutions.

The leaders of the Australian Islamic organizations affirmed

their solidarity with the hostages and their families.

“We pray for their safety and hope the crisis will be over quickly and peacefully,” they said.

Religious leaders across the country also called on their followers to “unite and pray for a peaceful end to the siege of Sydney.”

US State Department labels Egyptian Ansar bayt al-Maqdis terrorists

Washington, DC, April 9 /MCN/

The U.S. State Department announced today that it has designated Ansar bayt al-Maqdis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

The Office of the Spokesperson released a press release on the State Department website, saying that the Egyptian extremist group has been responsible for a number of attacks on Egyptians, tourists, and Israeli targets.

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis was created in 2011, following the Revolution. According to the State Department, “ABM” shares “some aspects of AQ (Al-Qaeda) ideology” but is a separate entity and retains a local focus.

ABM has attacked tourists, southern Israeli areas, Egyptian military personnel, government officials and civilians. ABM’s most recent attack was on a tour bus in the Sinai Peninsula in February of 2014. The bombing killed the Egyptian driver and

three South Korean tourists.

Egypt Sentences 529 to Death Over Police Attack

CAIRO March 23, 2014 (AP)

By MAGGIE MICHAEL Associated Press



An Egyptian court on Monday sentenced to death 529 people, said to be supporters of ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi involved in an attack on a police station that killed a senior police officer, in a mass trial that lasted only two sessions and raised an outcry from rights activists.

The verdicts are subject to appeal and would likely be overturned, rights lawyers said. But they said the swiftness and harshness of the rulings on such a large scale deepened concerns that Egypt's courts have been deeply politicized and that due process is being swept away amid the crackdown on Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood that followed his July overthrow.

Amnesty International said it was the largest single batch of simultaneous death sentences they had seen in recent years anywhere in the world.

In response, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the country's judiciary is "entirely independent and is not influenced in any way by the executive branch of government."

Egyptian authorities are holding a series of mass trials of alleged Morsi supporters, with anywhere from dozens to hundreds of defendants at a time. Monday's verdicts by a court

in the city of Minya, south of Cairo, were the first such mass trial to issue death sentences.

The court held two sessions. In the first on Saturday, the judge angrily shouted down requests by defense lawyers for more time to review the prosecution's case for the hundreds of defendants. In Monday's session, security forces barred defense lawyers from entering the courtroom on orders from the judge, the provincial police chief said.

"We didn't have the chance to say a word or to look at more than 3,000 pages of investigation to see what evidence they are talking about," Khaled el-Koumi, a lawyer representing 10 of the defendants, told The Associated Press.

All but around 150 of the defendants in the case were tried in absentia. The judges acquitted 16 defendants.

A senior official involved in courtroom security said that 154 defendants were brought in to the court on Monday. He said that the minute the judge announced the verdict, defendants in the cage screamed "You butcher" to the judge. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

The 545 defendants in the case were charged with murder, attempted murder, joining an outlaw group aiming at toppling down the regime and stealing government weapons in connection with an attack on a police station in August in the town of Matay in Minya province. One police officer was killed in the attack. The violence was part of rioting around the country, sparked when security forces stormed two pro-Morsi sit-ins in Cairo, killing over 600 people, on Aug. 14.

After the verdict was announced, families of the defendants protested outside the court building in Minya, shouting "Down with military rule." Police arrested three people from the protest. Fears of a backlash by Morsi supporters prompted security officials to go on alert around Minya province.

Mohammed Zarie, a Cairo-based human rights lawyer who was not involved in the case, said the verdicts reflect that Egypt's judiciary is turning "from a tool for achieving justice to an instrument for taking revenge."

Saudi Arabia declares Muslim Brotherhood, other organizations terrorist groups



Saudi Arabia on Friday declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group. Al Arabiya News Channel said via its website that the Saudi terrorism list also includes Hezbollah, al-Nusra Front, Daash and al-Qaeda.

Two days ago, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar for the first time in the 33-year-old history of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The three countries accused Qatar of working to threaten the political stability and security of the Gulf States by providing financial and

logistical support for the Houthis in Yemen, as well as supporting Brotherhood symbols in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain said Qatari money threatens the security of the whole region. Reports stated that Qatar supported the al-Qaida-linked al-Nusra Front in Syria and the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

The Egyptian Cabinet declared on December 25 that, "the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist group and its organization is a terrorist organization," according to Article 86 of the Egyptian Penal Code.

Seven Coptic Christians found killed in Libya's Benghazi

Benghazi (Libya), 24 February /MCN/

On Monday, Libyan police discovered seven Egyptian Christians killed in the Grotha area, west of the city of Benghazi in the east of Libya. Islamist militants are active in this area and there are many kidnappings and car bombings, Libyan security officials said.

Local Muslim calls for sharia patrols at city council

meeting

Dearborn: Local Muslim calls for sharia patrols at city council meeting



Islamic rage boy!!!

via [The Arab American News](#). h/t Dee

...a local Arab American took the podium to address concerns he had with the city. The man, who identified himself as Hassan, stated that he lived in Westland but had concerns he wanted to address as an individual who works in the city. He refused to publicly give his address fearing for the safety of his family.

After referencing Prophet Muhammad and loudly chanting Islamic prayers, Hassan said that the city needed to monitor neighborhood parks around the clock because people have been using them to conduct sexual activities. Council President Susan Dabaja, however, told him that the city doesn't have the resources or money for increased security at parks and asked him to move on to his next point.

Hassan also stated that there were magazines and newspapers at

the public libraries and civic center that can “cause colossal damage to a child’s health,” asking the city to review and monitor literature before they are distributed. Dabaja cited that freedom of speech laws exist and that parents, not the city, should monitor what their children read.

“These issues are not relevant to this body,” Councilman Thomas Tafelski added, looking frustrated.

Hassan was told he needed to speed up his message to the council because, according to council rules, an individual is limited to three minutes of speaking time during the public comments portion of the meeting. Hassan proceeded to address concerns he has regarding discrimination against Arabs in the city. He cited his current place of employment as an example.

“There is no political correctness contained and there is so much harassment towards Muslims and Arabs,” Hassan said.

Dabaja, however, was quick to tell him that his points were out of line and not issues that the council usually tackles.

“If you have concerns about your supervisor, then go ahead and seek the advice of legal counsel. This is not something that we as a body can address,” Dabaja stated before telling the individual that his time on the floor had expired.

Eleven Christians killed in attack on Nigerian church

Nigeria, /MCN/

Eleven Christians were killed on Friday in an attack on a church by gunmen believed to be affiliated with the Boko Haram

terrorist group in Admawa state in northeastern Nigeria.

According to the Xinhua Chinese news agency, Olaramo Maina, head of the Madajala regional government, said the pastor and 10 other worshipers were killed in the attack.

Maina said that a state of chaos prevailed among the people of the village, who were stunned after the attackers stormed the church and fired indiscriminately at worshipers.

Boko Haram has carried out frequent terrorist operations against Christians in northern Nigeria. The death toll of Christians has reached more than 1,500 people as a result of these operations carried out by the group over the past five years.

All 2014 News

December 15, 2014

Jihadist holds hostages in Sydney café, forces them to raise black IS flag



Sydney (Australia), December 15 /MCN/

A jihadist took a number of people hostage Monday inside a café in the city of Sydney and forced some of them to raise the black flag, taken as a banner by the Islamic State, from the café window.

According to media and witnesses, more than 30 people are being held hostage in the Lindt cafe in Martin Square, in the central business area in Sydney. Five hostages, including three men and two women, managed to get out amid intense police surveillance. It is unclear yet if they escaped or were released.

Sky News Australia reported that the captor telephoned three media outlets from the phones of the hostages and asked for the IS flag. He also telephoned Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

More than 40 Islamic organizations in Australia condemned the hostage-taking by armed Islamist elements inside the Sydney café.

“We reject any attempt to harm the lives of innocent people, or instil fear and terror in their hearts,” the organizations

said in a statement on Monday.

The gunmen forced some hostages to raise the black banner of jihad from the windows of the café, located in a famous district that includes major government and financial institutions as well as media institutions.

The leaders of the Australian Islamic organizations affirmed their solidarity with the hostages and their families.

“We pray for their safety and hope the crisis will be over quickly and peacefully,” they said.

Religious leaders across the country also called on their followers to “unite and pray for a peaceful end to the siege of Sydney.”

December 9, 2014

Muslims forcing closure and demolition of churches all over Ethiopia

“Corrupt officials willing to defend their religion rather than the laws they’ve sworn to uphold, are violating Christians’ rights by forcibly closing, destroying and demolishing churches across Ethiopia.” Islamic law forbids non-Muslims to build new houses of worship or to repair old ones. It seems as if Muslims in Ethiopia, with help from corrupt officials, are trying to establish that prohibition.

“Ethiopia Destroys Evangelical Church Building; 100 Christians Forced Underground,” [BosNewsLife](#), December 5, 2014:

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA (BosNewsLife)– Some 100 evangelical Christians in eastern Ethiopia were without a central place

for worship Friday, December 5, after local authorities destroyed their church building, a church official and rights activists said.

The Y Semay Birihan Church, or Heaven's Light Church, was demolished last week by Shenkore district police in the heavily Islamic city of Harar, said Pastor Zemach Tadesse, the 30-year-old senior pastor of the church.

Just days before the perceived attack, officials forcibly removed the church's exterior sign and warned believers not to worship there citing complaints by a local Muslim, according to Christians familiar with the case.

After Christians refused to halt worship services, police reportedly arrived November 28 to destroy the church building. Security forces were allegedly seen removing roofing materials and the church's siding while confiscating church properties. Police officials could not immediately be reached for comment...

Christians, who had been gathering in the church building for five years, are now meeting in smaller groups in homes of individual believers as they were instructed by local officials "not to gather under what remains of the church building," Pastor Tadesse said.

These are no isolated incidents, explained ICC, adding that it had documented "numerous ongoing land rights battles between churches and their local governments across Ethiopia."

In many cases, ICC said, "churches have been operating peacefully for decades on land given to them by now-deceased former congregants."

However efforts by local majority Muslim populations to "eliminate the public presence" of churches resulted in the forceful closure, destruction and demolition of several church buildings in recent years, according to ICC investigators.

LAND PUBLIC

In Ethiopia, all land is publicly, rather than privately, owned. Churches are forced to lease land for a limited period of time, after which they will have to either renegotiate the lease or vacate the premises and demolish any amendments or additions to the land, Christians said.

“In Muslim-majority areas of Ethiopia, Christians’ applications to lease their individual land to the local church have been wrongfully denied on multiple occasions,” complained ICC in a statement to BosNewsLife.

ICC’s Regional Manager for Africa, Cameron Thomas, accused Ethiopia of violating the rights of devoted Christians. **“Corrupt officials willing to defend their religion rather than the laws they’ve sworn to uphold, are violating Christians’ rights by forcibly closing, destroying and demolishing churches across Ethiopia,”** the official said...

November 5, 2014

Bangladesh Christian Association urges Pakistan PM to pardon Asia Bibi

Bangladesh, November 5 /MCN/

□Nirmol Rozario, general secretary of the Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) expressed “deep concern over the fate of Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five children, who was sentenced to death on charges of blasphemy.”

October 3, 2014

Austria proposes new law on Islam



Fearing extremism, Austrian leaders want a new law on Islam.
Photo: Reuters

Vienna: Austria called on Thursday for standardized German-language translations of the Koran and moved to prohibit foreign funding of Muslim organizations on its soil in a draft law aimed in part at tackling Islamic extremism.

The bill will overhaul a 1912 law governing the status of Austrian Muslims, prompting concern from a major local Islamic body, which saw it mirroring widespread mistrust of Muslims.

The initiative comes at a time of robust support for the far-right in Austria and also alarm over reports of Muslims from the small, neutral country joining Islamist militant forces fighting in the Middle East.

“The clear message should be that there is no contradiction between being a faithful Muslim and a proud Austrian,” said Foreign Affairs and Integration Minister Sebastian Kurz, a

member of the conservative People's Party.

"If you don't have orderly legal regulation ... this can always bring dangers (of extremism). In this sense, if you like this is maybe a part of prevention," he told reporters. He added that sharia, or Islamic law, had "no place here".

Roughly half a million Muslims live in Austria, representing about 6 percent of the total population, which is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic.

The Christian and Muslim communities have co-existed for years and relations have been relatively unproblematic by comparison with friction seen in other European nations.

For example, unlike France, Austria has not moved to ban Muslim women from wearing full-face veils in public.

However, tensions have grown with the rise of the anti-immigration and Islam-critical Freedom Party, which is backed by roughly a quarter of Austrians according to opinion polls.

Under the terms of the draft bill, state-recognized religious organizations will have to offer a unified German-language version of their doctrine and sources of faith, including for the Muslim holy book, the Koran.

At present, there are only two officially recognized Islamic organizations in Austria.

The legislation would also forbid Islamic teachers employed by any foreign states from working in Austria and stop outside funding for any Islamic organizations.

"Among the Muslim base, the law is not seen as a gift for the Eid holiday," said Carla Amina Baghajati, spokeswoman of the Islamic Community of Faith in Austria (IGGIO), referring to Eid-al-Adha which Muslims will celebrate in the coming days.

"(The bill) mirrors in its overtone the spirit of the times we

currently perceive, which is marked by blanket suspicion and mistrust against Muslims,” she said, adding that she was optimistic the legislation might still be amended.

Specifically, the IGGIO was worried about the law appearing to bundle together various Sunni, Shi’ite and Alawite sects and also about the ramifications of trying to agree on a unified German-language version of the Koran.

The Arabic version of the Koran is generally thought of as the word of Allah in Islam, with any translation including an element of interpretation.

“If a version of the Koran (in German) comes along as the codified, ultimate (version), then this would contradict the self-conception of Islam,” Ms Baghajati said.

Foreign minister Kurz told Austrian radio last month that numerous translations of the Koran had generated countless interpretations and said it was in the interests of local Muslims to eliminate possible misunderstandings.

The Austrian government warned in August that Islamist militancy was on the rise and officials have said around 140 people have left Austria to fight with the likes of the Islamic State, which has grabbed control of swathes of Iraq and Syria.

Last month, Austria said it would ban militant Islamist groups’ symbols and strip citizenship from people who travel abroad to fight with jihadists.

On Thursday Mr Kurz dismissed suggestions that a unified translation would pose a problem.

“Am I sceptical when I hear this is difficult or not easily done? Fundamentally no,” said Mr Kurz, adding that it had previously been possible to create unified teaching material for Islamic religious studies at schools across Austria.

Reut

Read

more:

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/austria-proposes-new-law-on-islam-20141003-10pm4l.html#ixzz3F1nLLP5h>

September 5, 2014

Ahmed Godane, leader of the al Shabaab Islamist group, is killed

WASHINGTON, Sept 5 (Reuters) – The Pentagon confirmed on Friday that Ahmed Godane, a leader of the al Shabaab Islamist group, was killed in a U.S. air strike in Somalia this week, calling it a “major symbolic and operational loss” for the al Qaeda-affiliated organization.

“We have confirmed that Ahmed Godane, the co-founder of al-Shabaab, has been killed,” Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, said in a statement.

Godane was a co-founder and leader of the group, which has carried many bombings and suicide attacks in Somalia and elsewhere, including the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013 that killed at least 39 people.

Godane publicly claimed responsibility for the Westgate attack, saying it was revenge for Kenyan and Western involvement in Somalia and noting its proximity to the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

His death left a huge gap in al Shabaab’s leadership and was seen as posing the biggest challenge to its unity since it emerged as a fighting force eight years ago.

Abdi Ayante, director of the Heritage Institute for Policy

Studies in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, said Godane's death would be "a game changer in many ways for al Shabaab."

"What is likely to happen is a struggle for power," he said a day before the Pentagon's confirmed Godane's death. Ayante said fragmentation was also possible in the absence of a leader with Godane's experience and ruthless approach to dissent.

U.S. forces carried out the military operation targeting Godane in Somalia on Monday, but the Pentagon did not confirm his death until Friday, saying it was still assessing the results of the air strike.

Kirby said in his statement that "removing Godane from the battlefield is a major symbolic and operational loss to al Shabaab."

A separate statement from White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said the operation that killed Godane was the result of "years of painstaking work by our intelligence, military and law enforcement professionals."

Earnest said the administration would continue to use financial, diplomatic, intelligence and military tools to address the threat posed by al Shabaab.

The U.S. State Department declared al Shabaab a foreign terrorist organization in 2008.

Somalia's government, with support from African peacekeepers and Western intelligence, has battled to curb al Shabaab's influence and drive the group from areas it has continued to control since it was expelled from Mogadishu in 2011.

(Reporting by David Alexander; Editing by Doina Chiacu and Susan Heavey)

August 1, 2014

Meriam Ibrahim arrives in New Hampshire, ready to begin new life

A Sudanese woman who faced the death penalty for refusing to recant her Christian faith has arrived in New Hampshire, ready to begin a new life.

Meriam Ibrahim, her husband and the couple's two children arrived Thursday night at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, where they were greeted by a throng of supporters from the city's Sudanese community before getting into an SUV and leaving the airport, [the New Hampshire Union Leader reports](#).

"Thank you so much," her husband, Daniel Wani, told reporters. "I am so relieved."

Ibrahim, who met Pope Francis at the Vatican last week after fleeing the U.S. embassy in Khartoum, did not speak.

Her brother-in-law, Gabriel Wani, said Ibrahim has been granted asylum by the United States and will soon meet with U.S. State Department officials.

Daniel Wani, a U.S. citizen since 2005, met Ibrahim on a trip to Sudan in 2011. He traveled to the war-torn African country last year to arrange for his wife and child to move to New Hampshire.

Ibrahim had been sentenced to death over charges of apostasy. Her father was Muslim, and her mother was an Orthodox Christian. She married Wani, a Christian from southern Sudan, in 2011. Muslim women in Sudan are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims. By law, children must follow their father's religion.

Sudan initially blocked Ibrahim from leaving the country even

after its highest court overturned her death sentence in June. At one point, the family took refuge at the U.S. embassy in Khartoum.

“As Sudanese, this story means a lot to us and is beyond a Christian woman being oppressed. It shows the oppression of our people by the current dictatorship regime.”- Rudwan Dawod, Sudanese activist

Gabriel Wani said the family now plans to “relax,” but didn’t have specifics on their immediate future. The Sudanese community in Manchester, northern New England’s largest city, will throw the family a party, he said.

One Sudanese activist who was jailed 45 days in a Khartoum prison for allegedly being a U.S. spy in 2012 told FoxNews.com that Ibrahim’s arrival is big news within the north African community.

“As Sudanese, this story means a lot to us and is beyond a Christian woman being oppressed. It shows the oppression of our people by the current dictatorship regime,” Rudwan Dawod wrote FoxNews.com. “It also highlights the collective efforts of people from all different backgrounds that supported Meriam’s release.”

June 24, 2014

Urgent: Meriam, accused of apostasy by Sudan, travels to Italy and meets pope



Rome, July 24/MCN/

Sudanese Christian Meriam Yahia arrived Thursday in Rome on an Italian government plane, accompanied with Lapo Pistelli, Italy's vice-minister for foreign affairs, and met the pope.

Meriam had been accused of apostasy of Islam and converting to Christianity, and had been sentenced to death. The death sentence raised angry international reactions, and the Court of the Appeal acquitted her last June 23.

Meriam Ibrahim looked relieved as she arrived at Rome airport. Pope Francis I, pope of Vatican met her for half an hour. She also met Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

Lapo Pistelli, Italy's vice-minister for foreign affairs, accompanied her on the flight from Khartoum and posted a photo of himself with Mrs. Ibrahim and her children on his Facebook account as they were about to land in Rome.

Mrs Ibrahim met Pope Francis at his Santa Marta residence at the Vatican soon after her arrival. The Pope thanked her for her witness to faith.

Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi said that the woman and her family thanked the Pope for showing closeness and for church's support for their case.

Matteo Renzi, Italy's Prime Minister, expressed the happiness of the Italian government, and said he had worked with the Sudanese government to help Meriam to obtain a visa to enter Italy.

Welcoming her at Ciampino Airport (near Rome), Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said: "Today is a day of celebration." Meriam was greeted at the airport by Italy's Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, his wife Agnese, Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini and vice-minister Lapo Pistelli who accompanied Meriam on the flight from Khartoum.

"We are proud of being Europeans," Renzi said. He praised the extraordinary work of the Lapo Pistelli.

"If there is no European reaction we cannot feel worthy to call ourselves 'Europe,'" Renzi said during inauguration of the European Council.

The Sudanese Court ordered last June 23 the release of Meriam Yahia who was sentenced to death last May 15 on charges of apostasy of Islam and converting to Christianity. Meriam was raised by her Christian mother and says she has never been Muslim. Meriam's family waived the charges, resulted in her release.

The judgment issued against her raised angry reactions .Several countries and human rights organizations asked the Sudanese government to cancel death sentence against Meriam.

June 24, 2014

Sudan death row woman Meriam Ibrahim rearrested

Ibrahim arrested with husband and two children at Khartoum

airport one day after she was released on orders of appeal court



Meriam Ibrahim's case has attracted international criticism.
Photograph: EPA

Meriam Ibrahim, the Christian woman released from death row in [Sudan](#) on Monday, was arrested with her husband and two children at Khartoum airport on Tuesday as the family attempted to leave the country.

Agents from the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) detained the family just 24 hours after Ibrahim was released on the orders of the appeal court.

Her lawyer, Elshareef Mohammed, who was with Ibrahim at Khartoum airport at the time of the arrest, said more than 40 NISS officers apprehended the family as they attempted to board a plane to the US. Ibrahim's husband, Daniel Wani, is a US citizen.



Meriam Ibrahim holding her daughter Maya, who was born in prison. Her husband Daniel Wani sits to her right holding their son Martin Photograph: theguardian.com

“It’s very disappointing,” Elshareef told the Guardian. “They were very angry. They took us [the family’s lawyers] outside, and took the family to a NISS detention centre. They have not been given access to lawyers.”

He said the appeal court had quashed Ibrahim’s convictions and there were no restrictions on her travelling. He added that political differences within the government over the case may have played a part in the decision to prevent her leaving.

“I’m very concerned. When people do not respect the court, they might do anything,” said Elshareef.

Ibrahim, 27, had been sentenced to death for apostasy. She insisted that she had been brought up as a Christian, despite her father being Muslim. She was also sentenced to be publicly flogged for adultery following a court’s ruling that her marriage to a Christian man was invalid.

After her release, Wani [told the Guardian](http://theguardian.com) that he hoped the family would be able to start a new life in the US. Ibrahim, Wani and their two children were taken to a safe house following her release from prison on Monday amid fears for the family’s safety.

Ibrahim's case attracted international criticism, which intensified after she gave birth to a daughter while shackled to the floor of her prison cell. Her toddler son was kept in Omdurman women's prison with her.

More than 1 million people backed a campaign by Amnesty International to free her. The British prime minister, David Cameron, said he was "absolutely appalled" by her treatment. Political and religious leaders, celebrities and human rights organisations condemned her incarceration. The British Foreign Office and US state department welcomed her release on Monday.

Amnesty said on Tuesday it was investigating reports of the family's detention.

Ibrahim was convicted of apostasy after the court insisted she was a Muslim because her father was a Muslim, even though Ibrahim said she had been brought up as a Christian after her father abandoned the family when she was six. Following her conviction last month, she was given three days to renounce her faith or face a death sentence.

Then eight months pregnant, she was told that her death sentence would be deferred for two years to allow her to nurse her unborn baby.

May 27, 2014

Sudanese Christian woman sentenced to death for apostasy gives birth in prison



Meriam Ibrahim and her husband

Khartoum, May 27/MCN/

Sudanese physician Meriam Ibrahim, who has been sentenced to death by a Sudanese court for converting to Christianity, gave birth to a baby girl early this morning.

Ms. Ibrahim's lawyer told the Daily Telegraph that Ms. Ibrahim, 27, gave birth to a baby girl – her second child – early this morning in a hospital inside the prison.

“The prison administration did not take Meriam to a hospital, and she gave birth in a prison clinic,” el-Shareef Ali said.

Ibrahim was convicted and sentenced to death on May 25. Since her arrest in February, she and her baby Martin, 20 months, have lived in a prison cell.

Ibrahim denied the charges of apostasy and adultery against her before the Khartoum Court. The court did not recognize her marriage to a Christian man, Daniel Wani, in 2011.

“My Muslim father abandoned the family and I converted to Christianity later,” Ibrahim said.

Ibrahim is supposed to be allowed to take care of her new baby

for two years before the death sentence is implemented.

Amnesty International has launched a petition demanding the Sudanese authorities stop the implementation of the death sentence against Ibrahim, and has collected more than 640,000 signatures to overturn the ruling so far.

May 15, 2014

Sudanese court sentences Christian woman to death after she refuses to “return” to Islam

Khartoum, May 15/MCN/

A Sudanese court sentenced Meriam Yehya Ibrahim, 27, to death today. She was given three days last Sunday to declare her repentance and return to Islam. She was convicted of the renunciation of Islam after she converted to Christianity.

Judge Abaas Mohamed Al-Khalifa told the Sudanese woman, “The court gave you three days to return to your faith, but you insisted not to return to Islam, so I sentenced you to death.”

During the hearing session, and after the long speech from a Muslim religious man who tried to convince her to return to Islam, Meriam told the judge quietly, “I am a Christian and I am not an apostate.”

Ibrahim is eight months pregnant and has been in prison with her 20-month-old child. She was raised a Christian by her mother after her father, a Muslim, left the family when she was six. Ibrahim is married to a Christian South Sudanese man.

May 14, 2014

Three killed in police firing after communal clashes in Hyderabad, curfew imposed

Amarnath K Menon Hyderabad, May 14, 2014 | UPDATED 19:25 IST



The trouble spot is contiguous to the communally sensitive Old City localities of Hyderabad.

Three men died in police firing following communal clashes near the Sikh Chawni locality in the Kishan Bagh area south of Hyderabad on Wednesday. Police opened fire to disperse rioting groups and imposed curfew in the entire Rajendranagar police station limits soon after to prevent the tension and violence from escalating and spreading to other areas. The trouble spot is contiguous to the communally sensitive Old City localities of Hyderabad.

Trouble erupted after some residents of the Sikh Chawni discovered that suspected miscreants, who belong to the

adjacent Muslim neighbourhood, had burnt one of their religious flags early on Wednesday. Warring groups from both sides gathered after two Muslim youth were attacked in retaliation for the burning of the flag. Police arrived as tensions deepened but even before they could pacify both groups began pelting stones at one another. Attacks on houses and arson followed. When the situation spun out of control the police opened fire to quell the rioters.

In the violence, three persons were killed and 17 others, including ten police personnel, were injured in the pelting of stones. At least ten vehicles, cars and two wheelers, were set afire and a few shops and houses besides a video camera vehicle of the Cyberabad police was attacked even as the police struggled to contain the clashes.

Apprehensive of the violence spreading to other areas the police imposed curfew in the Rajendranagar police station area and stepped up vigil in all sensitive areas of the Old City. Contingents of the armed police and para military forces brought to Hyderabad for election security were deployed to thwart any signs of trouble brewing in the city. Patrolling has also been stepped up in the interior areas of the Old City.

“We are ensuring that it does not have any other and further repercussions. We are ensuring that there is peace and tranquility in the city. Patrolling vehicles are on the move to maintain law and order. We will ensure that no further incidents taken place,” said the Hyderabad Police Commissioner Anurag Sharma.

Victims of the mayhem alleged that the assailants armed with swords and knives entered their houses and attacked them. They alleged police opened fire without using teargas or batons. Some of the trouble makers were taken into custody, police pickets have been set up and certain areas barricaded to prevent spread of violence. “The police did precious little to

contain and put an end to the violence in a systematic manner. Instead it resorted to a knee jerk reaction – firing on the rioters,” complained the All India Majlis – e – Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi.

The police have a different version of the developments. “Around 1,000 members from both sides indulged in clashes. As lathi-charge proved ineffective, police warned the clashing groups and opened fire. Curfew has been imposed indefinitely and Section 144 Crpc banning the assembly of four or more persons clamped in Rajendranagar police state area under Cyberabad Police Commissionerate,” explained a senior police official. By dusk, tension had not eased though stepped up security ensured that the situation was under control.

Tension between the Deccani Sikhs and the Muslims living in the area is not new. In 2006, one person was killed and several injured in a similar communal clash.

Read [more](http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/three-killed-in-police-firing-after-communal-clashes-in-hyderabad-curfew-imposed/1/361818.html) at:
<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/three-killed-in-police-firing-after-communal-clashes-in-hyderabad-curfew-imposed/1/361818.html>

April 23, 2014

Tony Blair urges western leaders to engage threat of Islamic extremism



London, April 23 /MCN/

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said today that Western nations need to “engage” Islamic extremism.

Business Insider reported that Blair spoke on the threat of terrorism from countries like Pakistan and Iran at a keynote speech at Bloomberg in London. Instead of competing with Russia and China, Western nations, must, if necessary ally with these two rising powers, said Blair.

“We have to stop treating each country on the basis of whatever seems to make for the easiest life for us at any one time. We have to have an approach to the region that is coherent and sees it as a whole,” said Blair, who is the envoy for the Middle East Quartet of the UN, the EU, the US and Russia.

Middle East online quoted Blair saying that the danger of religious extremism is “growing”. He also warned that it should be at the “top of the agenda” for Western leaders, not Ukraines crisis or any other foreign issue.

According to Blair, the Middle East is struggling with the place of religion and politics, versus embracing “modern

world- politically, socially and economically”.

“This is what makes it so hard for democracy to take root,” he said.

In defense of this idea, Blair supported the ousting of Morsi in Egypt, saying that the Muslim Brotherhood had been “systematically taking over the traditions and institutions of the country”.

April 9, 2014

US State Department labels Egyptian Ansar bayt al-Maqdis terrorists

Washington, DC, April 9 /MCN/

The U.S. State Department announced today that it has designated Ansar bayt al-Maqdis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

The Office of the Spokesperson released a press release on the State Department website, saying that the Egyptian extremist group has been responsible for a number of attacks on Egyptians, tourists, and Israeli targets.

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis was created in 2011, following the Revolution. According to the State Department, “ABM” shares “some aspects of AQ (Al-Qaeda) ideology” but is a separate entity and retains a local focus.

ABM has attacked tourists, southern Israeli areas, Egyptian military personnel, government officials and civilians. ABM’s most recent attack was on a tour bus in the Sinai Peninsula in February of 2014. The bombing killed the Egyptian driver and three South Korean tourists.

March 23, 2014

Egypt Sentences 529 to Death Over Police Attack

CAIRO March 23, 2014 (AP)

By MAGGIE MICHAEL Associated Press



An Egyptian court on Monday sentenced to death 529 people, said to be supporters of ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi involved in an attack on a police station that killed a senior police officer, in a mass trial that lasted only two sessions and raised an outcry from rights activists.

The verdicts are subject to appeal and would likely be overturned, rights lawyers said. But they said the swiftness and harshness of the rulings on such a large scale deepened concerns that Egypt's courts have been deeply politicized and that due process is being swept away amid the crackdown on Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood that followed his July overthrow.

Amnesty International said it was the largest single batch of simultaneous death sentences they had seen in recent years anywhere in the world.

In response, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the country's judiciary is "entirely independent and is not influenced in any way by the executive branch of government."

Egyptian authorities are holding a series of mass trials of alleged Morsi supporters, with anywhere from dozens to hundreds of defendants at a time. Monday's verdicts by a court in the city of Minya, south of Cairo, were the first such mass trial to issue death sentences.

The court held two sessions. In the first on Saturday, the

judge angrily shouted down requests by defense lawyers for more time to review the prosecution's case for the hundreds of defendants. In Monday's session, security forces barred defense lawyers from entering the courtroom on orders from the judge, the provincial police chief said.

"We didn't have the chance to say a word or to look at more than 3,000 pages of investigation to see what evidence they are talking about," Khaled el-Koumi, a lawyer representing 10 of the defendants, told The Associated Press.

All but around 150 of the defendants in the case were tried in absentia. The judges acquitted 16 defendants.

A senior official involved in courtroom security said that 154 defendants were brought in to the court on Monday. He said that the minute the judge announced the verdict, defendants in the cage screamed "You butcher" to the judge. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

The 545 defendants in the case were charged with murder, attempted murder, joining an outlaw group aiming at toppling down the regime and stealing government weapons in connection with an attack on a police station in August in the town of Matay in Minya province. One police officer was killed in the attack. The violence was part of rioting around the country, sparked when security forces stormed two pro-Morsi sit-ins in Cairo, killing over 600 people, on Aug. 14.

After the verdict was announced, families of the defendants protested outside the court building in Minya, shouting "Down with military rule." Police arrested three people from the protest. Fears of a backlash by Morsi supporters prompted security officials to go on alert around Minya province.

Mohammed Zarie, a Cairo-based human rights lawyer who was not involved in the case, said the verdicts reflect how Egypt's judiciary is turning "from a tool for achieving justice to an

instrument for taking revenge.”

March 7, 2014

Saudi Arabia declares Muslim Brotherhood, other organizations terrorist groups



Saudi Arabia on Friday declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group. Al Arabiya News Channel said via its website that the Saudi terrorism list also includes Hezbollah, al-Nusra Front, Daash and al-Qaeda.

Two days ago, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Qatar for the first time in the 33-year-old history of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The three countries accused Qatar of working to threaten the political stability and security of the Gulf States by providing financial and logistical support for the Houthis in Yemen, as well as supporting Brotherhood symbols in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain said Qatari money threatens the security of the whole region. Reports stated that Qatar supported the al-Qaida-linked al-Nusra Front in Syria and the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

The Egyptian Cabinet declared on December 25 that, “the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist group and its organization is a terrorist organization,” according to Article 86 of the Egyptian Penal Code.

February 24, 2014

Seven Coptic Christians found killed in Libya’s Benghazi

Benghazi (Libya), 24 February /MCN/

On Monday, Libyan police discovered seven Egyptian Christians killed in the Grotha area, west of the city of Benghazi in the east of Libya. Islamist militants are active in this area and there are many kidnappings and car bombings, Libyan security officials said.

February 2, 2014

Dearborn: Local Muslim calls for sharia patrols at city council meeting



Islamic rage boy!!!

via [The Arab American News](#). h/t Dee

...a local Arab American took the podium to address concerns he had with the city. The man, who identified himself as Hassan, stated that he lived in Westland but had concerns he wanted to address as an individual who works in the city. He refused to publicly give his address fearing for the safety of his family.

After referencing Prophet Muhammad and loudly chanting Islamic prayers, Hassan said that the city needed to monitor neighborhood parks around the clock because people have been using them to conduct sexual activities. Council President Susan Dabaja, however, told him that the city doesn't have the resources or money for increased security at parks and asked him to move on to his next point.

Hassan also stated that there were magazines and newspapers at the public libraries and civic center that can "cause colossal damage to a child's health," asking the city to review and monitor literature before they are distributed. Dabaja cited that freedom of speech laws exist and that parents, not the city, should monitor what their children read.

"These issues are not relevant to this body," Councilman Thomas Tafelski added, looking frustrated.

Hassan was told he needed to speed up his message to the council because, according to council rules, an individual is limited to three minutes of speaking time during the public comments portion of the meeting. Hassan proceeded to address concerns he has regarding discrimination against Arabs in the city. He cited his current place of employment as an example.

"There is no political correctness contained and there is so much harassment towards Muslims and Arabs," Hassan said.

Dabaja, however, was quick to tell him that his points were out of line and not issues that the council usually tackles.

“If you have concerns about your supervisor, then go ahead and seek the advice of legal counsel. This is not something that we as a body can address,” Dabaja stated before telling the individual that his time on the floor had expired.

February 2, 2014

Eleven Christians killed in attack on Nigerian church

Nigeria, /MCN/

Eleven Christians were killed on Friday in an attack on a church by gunmen believed to be affiliated with the Boko Haram terrorist group in Admawa state in northeastern Nigeria.

According to the Xinhua Chinese news agency, Olaramo Maina, head of the Madajala regional government, said the pastor and 10 other worshipers were killed in the attack.

Maina said that a state of chaos prevailed among the people of the village, who were stunned after the attackers stormed the church and fired indiscriminately at worshipers.

Boko Haram has carried out frequent terrorist operations against Christians in northern Nigeria. The death toll of Christians has reached more than 1,500 people as a result of these operations carried out by the group over the past five years.