

Muslim Attack on Christians in Egypt Provoked By Installation of Church Bell

Contributed by Mary Abdelmassih, AINA
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(AINA) -- An exchange of harsh words on July 25 between Ruth, a Christian woman, and Gassem Fouad, a Muslim man who had parked his tricycle in front of her home, escalated into assault by the man on Ruth and other Christian villagers, and the arrest of one Copt. After Ruth, who is 5 months pregnant, was assaulted, a Muslim mob waited for Coptic farmers to return from the fields, where they were intercepted and beaten with iron rods and pipes.

Security forces managed to contain the situation.

Six Christians, including Ruth and her sister-in-law Hannan, were hospitalized with concussions, head injuries and broken limbs. No Muslim was injured.

None of the Muslim perpetrators was arrested. Ruth's husband, Kirillos Daniel, was accused of possessing a weapon -- a rifle found thrown where the Christians were attacked, and is under detention.

In an interview on CTV Coptic TV, Father Estephanos Shehata, of the Samalout Coptic dioceses, said "The real reason behind this assault was the church bell, which has greatly angered the Muslims in the village." He said the dilapidated church in the village of Ezbet Jacob Bebawi, outside Samalout, north of Minya, was given permission to renovate and this was completed last week, and the church bell was reinstalled.

"This is the first time such an incident has taken place in this village," said Father Estephanos, "which is 60-75% Christian, and the reason is definitely the presence of the church bell."

Christian villagers believe this assault was premeditated and they fear their church faces imminent attack, especially since Muslims have been slowly congregating in the village, which has a very weak presence of security forces.

By Mary Abdelmassih

