

EGYPT

Charges of blasphemy and contempt of religion have been used in Egypt to criminalize the freedom of thought: the right to have doubts about some religious teachings, to express them publicly and to share them with others.

From 2011 to 2013, courts convicted twenty-seven of forty-two defendants on charges of contempt for religion, according to the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR). Judges acquitted three defendants and rejected charges against eleven others for lack of standing.

In March 2014, the Interior Ministry official in charge of security in Alexandria said he would form a task force to arrest atheists. In June 2014, following the election of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt's youth and religious endowments ministries announced a joint campaign to confront the spread of atheism.

On 10th December 2014, the Dar al-Ifta, a Justice Ministry wing that issues religious edicts, released a survey claiming that Egypt was home to 866 atheists, the highest number of any country in the Middle East. Two aides to the Grand Mufti – the head of the Dar al-Ifta – described the supposed increase in atheism as “a dangerous development” that “should ring alarm bells,” *Mada Masr* reported.

Coptic Orthodox

Kirollos Shawki ATALLAH

Age: 19 years

Date and place of arrest: In November 2014, at a café in the Beheira governorate

Charges: Posting photos on Facebook deemed defamatory to Islam

First court decision: On 17th June 2014

Last court decision: On 10th January 2015, he was sentenced to three years in prison by a minor offenses court.

Source: <http://www.releaseinternational.org/egypt-christian-gets-6-year-jail-term-for-liking-facebook-page/>

Makram DIAB

Age: 49 years

Date and place of arrest: In February 2012

Charges: Insulting the Prophet and provoking students

Statement of the defendant: He claims he told a Salafi Muslim that Muhammad had more than four wives, which resulted in an argument.

Article of the criminal/ civil/ administrative code: Article 98 of the Egyptian Penal Code, which prescribes a sentence of six months to five years and a fine of 500 to 1,000 Egyptian pounds for anyone who uses religion to propagate ‘extremist ideas’ to incite strife, insult a monotheistic religion, or damage national unity.

First court decision: On 29th February 2012 he was sentenced to six years in prison.

Last court decision: On 16th March and 4th April 2012, two appeals were rejected.

Place of detention: Assiut General Prison

Other information: The first trial lasted only ten minutes and no defense attorney was present. The first appeal process triggered a massive riot by Muslim attorneys. The judge doubled the sentence to appease an angry mob, 2,500 strong, which had surrounded the courtroom demanding Diab's death.

Source: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2012/04-April/article_1497614.html/

<http://www.investigativeproject.org/4034/arab-spring-egypt-legal-persecution-of-christians>