

EGYPT: Seven Coptic Christians killed by Isil in bus attack

The Telegraph (02.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2PDQPXW> – Gunmen attacked a bus carrying Coptic Christians in central Egypt on Friday, killing at least seven in the latest attack on a religious minority repeatedly targeted by jihadists.

The attackers opened fire on the bus in Minya, the province's bishop told AFP.

The gunmen "killed seven people and wounded 14, all of whom are in the Sheikh Fadel hospital in Beni Mazar" around 200 kilometres (120 miles) south of Cairo, said Bishop Makarios of Minya.

A security official confirmed the attack, adding that there were "dead and wounded".

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the shooting.

Copts, a Christian minority that make up 10 percent of Egypt's 96 million people, have in recent years been repeatedly targeted by the The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant jihadist group.

Isil killed more than 40 people in twin church bombings in April 2017 and a month later shot dead 28 Christians in Minya province as they headed to a monastery on a bus.

Egypt's government imposed a countrywide three-month state of emergency after the April 2017 church bombings.

In December 2017 an Isil gunman killed nine people in an attack on a church in a south Cairo suburb.

A year earlier, an Isil suicide bomber killed almost 30 worshippers at a church in Cairo located in the Saint Mark's Cathedral complex, the seat of the Coptic papacy.

The Egyptian army launched a major offensive in February 2018 against Isil in the Sinai Peninsula, where the group has waged a deadly insurgency since the fall of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

Alongside attacks against Copts, the jihadists have killed hundreds of soldiers and policemen in Egypt in recent years and were allegedly behind a November 2017 attack against a mosque in north Sinai that killed more than 300 people.

The military offensive – Dubbed “Sinai 2018” – has killed more than 450 jihadists, according to an army estimate, while around 30 Egyptian soldiers have been killed during this

year's operation.

Egyptian authorities have also convicted jihadists for their role in attacks against Copts.

Last month an Egyptian military court sentenced 17 people to death over the suicide attacks against churches in 2016 and 2017.

Copts have long complained of discrimination in Egypt and Isil is not the only group to have launched sectarian attacks against the community.

In December 2017, hundreds of Muslims attacked a church south of Cairo that had been operating without a permit for more than a dozen years.

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