

Egypt: Teenager's murder 'aimed to intimidate Copts ahead of Christmas', says his pastor

The body of 14-year-old Ishak Nashaat Birwan was found on Wednesday (20 December), 11 days after he disappeared, in a canal near where he lived in Izziyah, a large Christian village near Manfalout in Asyut.

Samir Fekry, Ishak's cousin, told World Watch Monitor that the body was taken to the morgue at the public hospital in Manfalout for a post-mortem.

"Ishak's body had facial deformities, it had no eyes and there were signs of torture on different parts of his body," he said.

Fekry said Ishak's family went to the police the day after his disappearance but "none of them did anything to help us investigate the matter".

People told us later that on 9 December, three young men asked Ishak for a lift in his tuk-tuk, Fekry said. "Ishak then disappeared and there was no word from him," he added. "We tried to call him many times but his mobile phone was turned off. We searched for him everywhere in our village and the villages nearby, but we couldn't find him."

Ishak's body was released from the morgue after a day and his funeral at Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Izziyah village was attended by large crowds of people.

The church's pastor, Rev. Adel Rafaat, told World Watch Monitor: "Ishak was a very good young man, he was one of our

church members. He was loved by all of us and he loved everybody. He always had a smile.

“Ishak was targeted and killed because of his faith, because he is Christian. They wanted to spoil the joy of our coming Christmas. Extremists chose a young man from our village specifically because our village is a big Christian village and their aim was to turn Christmas joy of the villagers to sadness.”

Fekry expressed frustration with the authorities for not taking more action to find his cousin. He said: “Ishak had no enemies ... After kidnapping him, none of the kidnappers contacted us demanding any ransom for his return. So why he was killed? Was it because he is a Christian? We demand the government find the killer and the cause of the killing and how he disappeared for 10 days until he was found dead.”