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Conversions of Christians to Islam; forced or free?

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1) Introduction:

In June 1995, the Egyptian human rights lawyer Mr. Maurice Sadek introduced me to Mr. George Onsi, a poor Christian man from the Pyramids area in Cairo with the story that his daughter Salwa had been kidnapped by force by a Muslim (example 50). Mr. Sadek came with more stories. ~~Everytime it was a~~ Christian girl who was kidnapped by Muslims. In May 1996, the Ibn Khaldun Institute, based in Cairo, organized a conference on Muslim-Christian dialogue. Mr. Sadek was there and gave on the 13th a lecture on the kidnapping of Christian girls. "There are thousands" he said "and many of them are below the age of 18." and Sadek showed a document of the Central Police Security Office of Cairo showing eleven conversions in one morning, ten of them below the age of 18. A Cairo based journalist told me at that time he had interviewed a number of these families. "Every time I see the same pattern. Father is forced to sign a form promising that he won't attempt to see his daughter again. The family of the Muslim informs the Christian family that they are willing to give them back their daughter if they pay a certain sum of money but no guarantee is given if the money is paid."

In May 1996, Mr. Sadek introduced me to the family of the 17-year old Irene Sadeq who told me the story of how their daughter disappeared. On July 17 her family tried to force her to return home but she refused.

In June 1996, the Egyptian weekly Roz el-Yousef wrote about a 14 year old girl who was kidnapped. A month later, Bernard Lewis of the BBC approached me and asked if Christian girls are indeed kidnapped. We went together to Mr. Sadek who introduced us to the mother of Samia from Dairut (example 49) who told us a very emotional story of how she lost her daughter. All these stories led we wonder, what is really going on.

The word 'kidnap' supposes that a girl is taken by force, against her own will. Rev. Dr. Samuel Habib, president of the Synod of the Coptic Evangelical churches said in an interview in July 1996 that he looked into many similar cases. "The family of the girl usually says that their daughter was kidnapped. They wouldn't claim that if a son disappeared. In my understanding until now, there has not been one single case of kidnapping, however there are many cases of a young woman or a man who wants to marry a person from the other religion."

In July 1996 I also interviewed Dr. Mohammed Tantawi, Grand-Sheikh of the Azhar, Sunni-Islam's most important institution, about the claims that girls are kidnapped. Dr. Tantawi said he does not know of a girl who was ^{of such a case} forced against her will but if I would hear about it, he wanted to be informed because "we have a Quranic verse saying there is no enforcement // in religion. "Believe^s are not sold and bought and forcing religion on people does not create real believers, it only creates hypocritical people. No one should force anyone to believe in anything."

This report is focused on Christians. But every now and then I heard about Muslim girls being 'kidnapped'. Egyptian newspapers sometimes give examples of men taking young girls by force, raping them and trying to disappear, leaving behind the poor girl. In Maadi, a quarter of Cairo a man raped a handicapped girl. Another story is about a teacher misusing his position to rape his students. Girls in general are vulnerable in Egypt, especially if they are from a lower social class and are poorly educated. These are all horrible examples but the story does receive more attention if a Christian ends up leaving Christianity. Then religious arguments enter the discussion, even if, for example a love affair, was not intended to be so. Anything related to Muslim-Christian relations is sensitive in Egypt because events are so easily taken out of context and can infuriate people who do not know that context. That is why it is important to look at examples and describe them carefully, bringing back the issue to its real proportions.

I have written about the stories of Salwa Onsi (December 1995) and Irene Sadeq (July 1996) for the "Reformatorisch Dagblad", a Dutch Daily. I informed my paper about all the examples I heard and they asked me to try to find out if there is a pattern. It was remarkable that hardly anything is published on the subject. Maurice Sadek mentions cases in the newsletter of his Center for Human Rights and National Unity. I found a book called "The Lost Sheep, How Can It Get Lost" (published by the Coptic Orthodox Church of The Apostle Saint Mark & Pope Peter The Last Martyr in Alexandria in Arabic in 1996, registered by the Egyptian book house under number 8950) which give various examples which I also used for this report. The Egyptian

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weekly Roz el-Yousef (June 1996) wrote about the kidnapping of Christian girls and based their information probably on Sadek's lecture at the Ibn Khaldun Institute. Occasionally the Egyptian weekly "Wattany" gives examples of parents who lost their daughters. I am not aware of anything else published about this issue in Egypt.

It wasn't difficult to find examples. Mr. Maurice Sadek allowed me to review all his files of girls he considered to be kidnapped. Priests and individual church members came with stories. Without searching for examples, I collected some 80 examples over the course of one year. It was, however, much more difficult to find out what really happened. All stories were initially told from the perspective of the family of the girl or boy. Priests and church workers were generally more honest in explaining other factors that played a role. Maurice Sadek's files with the official documents and statements were definitely helpful. It was, however, difficult to hear the perspective from the Muslim side. The "Lagnet el-Fatwa" or the Religious Ruling Council of the Azhar was helpful to explain the conversion procedure, but Christians who turned to Islam could not be interviewed except for one person (example **) who returned back to her family. This was not because the Azhar did not want to help but because they do not follow cases after their conversion and do not maintain addresses. Sheikh Yousef el-Badri claims he brought over 300 Christians to Islam but after several times asking he did not introduce me to one of them.

I am based in Cairo, so naturally most stories come from the greater Cairo region, but also stories from Alexandria and Upper Egypt were collected. It is evidently a phenomenon from Alexandria to Aswan.

The conclusion may be drawn from the information collected that the claim that Christian children are being kidnapped is mostly exaggerated. On the other hand, the large number of minors among the converted raises questions. Maurice Sadek automatically terms each Christian minor, who converts to Islam a case of 'kidnap'. But in a country where traditionally both Muslim and Christian girls married very young, it is even then questionable if the term 'kidnap' is correct.

The accusation by some activists who claimed that the Azhar pays for someone to convert to Islam is ~~not true~~ *not substantiated*. The cases studied show that conversions result from social difficulties ranging from poverty, money offered by individual Muslims (for organizations there is no proof), problems within the family, love, to the lack of understanding the Christian faith.

In several cases, the local police have made mistakes. In other cases, they dealt with the issue in a proper way. Police methods needs greater attention but it is

incorrect to claim, on basis of the cases studied, that there must be instructions from higher authorities in the police or even the Ministry of Interior. On the other hand it is probably true that the Ministry has neglected the issue. Maurice Sadek has several letters of families to the Minister and even President Hosni Mubarak but none of them were answered.

Often human rights activists use the term 'persecution' too easily. Persecution is deliberate oppressive and systematic treatment of a certain group for religious or other reasons. There is no proof that the conversion of Christians to Islam is the result of such a treatment. There is no proof it is organized or perhaps even instigated from higher authorities. But there is sufficient evidence that there is a strong religious zeal to win non-Muslims for Islam and that available means, also in government service, are used by individuals. The government is to a large extent neglecting the misuse of some government officials. The case of Salwa Onsi, however, shows that if lawyers have sufficient evidence of government misconduct they do not leave people unpunished.

I hope this report can contribute to a better understanding between Muslims and Christians. I liked the open-minded attitude of Dr. Tantawi in the above mentioned interview. He said that sensitive issues like this should be discussed. "We welcome any kind of dialogue. Any kind of reasonable dialogue is a good thing. For any kind of logical dialogue, and any dialogue that searches for the truth, my heart is open, my office is open, my home is open and all the Azhar scientific groups are open to all those who are seeking dialogue."

I believe that it is important that Muslims and Christians live in peace in Egypt. That only can be done if there is a continuous dialogue on all levels going on. Dialogue is in my perspective more than nice phrases and statements, however good they are. Dialogue means discussing issues that concerns both Muslims and Christians, that touches the basis of being Muslim or Christian. Conversions from Christianity to Islam is definitely such an issue. In such a discussion it is of vital importance to be honest, to present cases as they are. I have tried to do this in this report and hope it will contribute to a better understanding of a very sensitive issue and a better understanding of Muslims about an issue that is important for Christians and an understanding of Christians that exaggeration is not helping them. The stories that now circulate create a feeling of fear and distance towards Muslims which is not good. On the other hand Christians will have to deal with the issue in their own circles. Only then will it be possible to discuss the real excesses and find solutions to address those issues.

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The cases are collected and presented in a report. In the first chapter, information is given about the numbers involved. The second chapter describes the procedures for conversion.

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Only the first names of the converted and no names for the informants are given for privacy reasons. The cases found were sorted into different categories.

2) Statistics

Thousands of Christians convert to Islam every year in Egypt. Reliable statistics are only available at the Ministry of Interior where the conversions must be registered but those statistics are not available to the public. The result is a variety of estimates. Some church sources estimate the number of conversions to be 23,000 per year, while others believe that number is far too high. The Muslim newspaper "El-Muslimun", citing an Azhar-source in June 1996, claimed that some 10 Christians a day convert to Islam in Cairo alone. I have seen the records at the Azhar where they register everyone who says the Islamic creed which is necessary before becoming a Muslim. According to those records, between 800 and 900 Christians convert annually in El-Azhar alone. Azhar employees stated that the majority of Christians who convert come first to al-Azhar. They also said that they attract people from outside Cairo because of the reputation the Azhar has in Egypt.

I was told the Ministry of Interior does not provide statistics because it does not want to draw attention to a subject which is highly sensitive in Egypt. Islam is a missionary religion which tries to attract followers of other religions to accept its creed. Christians in Egypt, on the other hand, try to keep their flock together. Every conversion is a painful experience for the people and family involved. Accusations are made and ties with family and friends are cut. The Ministry of Interior therefore tries to avoid all publicity about the subject. This lack of verifiable public information leads to a wide variety of estimates, often serving own interests as well. Some Christians might exaggerate numbers because it shows how bad their situation is, how big the losses are and that help is needed. Sometimes they claim to be informed by 'friends within the Ministry of Interior'. But a well-known pastor in Cairo said that they give these figures "to scare us". Some Muslims on the other hand, probably including the newspaper al-Muslimun, might exaggerate to show their followers how successful they are in drawing Christians to Islam. The most reliable statistics, therefore, come from the Azhar and from some priests who keep statistics about the number of cases they have seen. According to a bishop who doesn't want to be known, approximately 10 to 15.000 Christians convert each year to Islam.

In Northern Egypt during 1996, "the "Moduriyet el-Amn" or the Central Police Security Office in Alexandria told us about 54 conversion cases from Christianity to Islam." says a priest. "Those 54 persons who converted to Islam at 1996 are only those who the Central Police Security Office informed us about, but I believe the real number of those who converted at 1996 are double that number."

3) Procedures

Anyone who wants to convert to Islam in Egypt has to go through some certain procedures in order to legalize his conversion. These procedures are:

Step One: saying the Islamic declaration of faith.

One who wishes to convert must have an identity card. Generally only persons 16 years of age or older have such an identity card. These record a person's religious status. The person wishing to convert must say the 'shehada', the Islamic declaration of faith, before any sheikh and two witnesses.

The text of the Shehada is:

" I declare that there is no God but Allah, Mohammed is the prophet and servant of Allah and he was sent by Allah to all people. I believe in Allah, his angels, his books, his prophets and in the doomsday. I do not accept anything from any other religion that is not in accordance with Islam. I declare that Issa (Jesus) is a servant of Allah and his prophet and that Mohammed is the last prophet and messenger who was sent by Allah. "

It is important to note here that the name for God 'Allah' is also used by most Christians in Egypt. But the statements that Mohammed is God's prophet and 'the last prophet' and the one making the declaration that nothing will be accepted from any religion that is not in accordance with Islam, make it very clear that the convert has to break with the basic tenet of Christian faith which is that only through Jesus Christ there is salvation for mankind. Christianity does not accept that any prophet came after Jesus Christ. For Christians, Mohammed, therefore, cannot be more than 'an important historical figure' or 'the founder of Islam' or similar statements.

Several sheikhs confirmed that they do not ask for someone's motive for conversion. The attitude is that no one should be refused when he asks for conversion. "We cannot look into someone's heart and see what their real motives are. Only God can see this," one of them said. Knowledge of Islam is desirable but not required for becoming Muslim.

After saying the 'shehada', the convert must write down his personal data in a book, which the Azhar obtains from the Ministry of Interior and which needs to be

*Ref. Paul's
writing*

returned to the Ministry after it is full. Such books are only available in places which are recognized by the Ministry of Interior as places where people can convert such as the Azhar and some other big mosques in Egypt. The convert receives a certificate proving that he had said the 'shehada'.

Step Two; Reporting to the police.

The convert must go with the certificate to the police station in the area where he lives in order to inform them of his conversion. The police writes down the convert's statements (this is called in Arabic 'mahdar') which is signed by the convert after he or she agrees with what is written. It is the task of the police to provide the convert with protection, requested or not, against any aggressive act that might be taken against him by his family. The police sends a note to the Central Police Security Office which sets a date for the convert to meet with a Religious Counseling Committee in the Central Police Security Office.

Step Three; Going to the Religious Counseling Committee

The convert must go to the Religious Counseling Committee of the Central Police Security Office in the governorate where he lives. In this session he meets with three priests or pastors assigned by his own denomination. The Central Police Security Office only seems to distinguish between 'Orthodox', 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' and thus does not distinguish between the numerous denominations found within the larger category of Protestantism. By far the large majority of conversions involve the Coptic Orthodox. The Coptic Orthodox Pope Shenouda assigns priests who meet with every Orthodox Christian who wants to convert to Islam. The priests cannot meet with the convert alone because the Religious Counseling Sessions must be also attended by three Muslims educated at the Azhar-University, the main center for Islamic education in Egypt. Usually there is one session, but if the priests request and if the Muslim members of the session agree, a convert could be invited for a second session. A third session is highly unusual.

Families and priests criticize these sessions. The police not only tell the converts they are protected, which is legally correct, but they often threaten and terrify the converts by telling them that if they change their minds during their session with the priest, they will be punished very badly. It is reported that some officers act very arrogantly and say things to the priest "shut up!" Priests complain they cannot speak to the convert without police officers being present. They would like to have the opportunity to speak freely.

Step Four; getting registered

If the priests during the Religious Counseling Session(s) are not able to convince the convert to remain Christian and the convert insists on converting to Islam, he goes to the (land) registration department or "shahr el-akari" to register the certificate of declaring his belief in Islam. Then, he takes this registered certificate and goes to the civil registry office or "maktab es-segil el-madani" which issued his identification card, to register himself as a Muslim. He can also choose a Muslim name such as Mohammed, Ali, Fatma....etc. for himself which is not obligatory but often done. Only after having completed all steps in this procedure does he legally become a Muslim and enjoy all the Muslim rights.

Minimum age for conversion:

* There is a conflict between the Islamic law and Egyptian civil law. Islamic law knows no minimum age for conversion. Civil law does. The basic requirement in Islamic law is that the person concerned understands something of Islam. If a child of 10 years old, for example, claims to know Islam and says he wants to convert, it is theoretically possible.

According to the Egyptian civil law, the clauses no. 135 and 136 of the official government communiqué number 5 in 1970 cite that no one is allowed to convert to Islam unless he or she is at least 16 years old. (N: Maurice Sadek said in my interview with him about Irene Sadek that the new law states someone is free to choose his or her religion after he or she reached the age of 18. Please check this with Sadek)

Several examples show that local police officers have violated this civil law and have allowed minors younger than 16 years old to convert to Islam. The practice is that these children are placed, with the protection of the police, in the house of a strong believing Muslim who would treat them well but who also educates them in Islam. Only after they have reached the age of 16 they will be able to go through the formal conversion process. Police officers have pressed their families to sign documents promising that they will not interfere with their minor children or try to have them back. This means that if someone starts the conversion procedure for whatever reason, it is very hard to stop the procedure.

4) Reasons for conversion.

Lack of churches and Christian education

Priests and church workers point out that most problems occur in areas where the church is not present. Alexandria, a city of approximately five million inhabitants, with hundreds of thousands of Christians, 90% of whom are Orthodox, has only 35 Orthodox churches serving the city's Christians. Many of those churches were built during Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency from 1956 to 1970. A priest in Alexandria says they could build only one new church since Anwar Sadat's presidency in 1970 but it was closed a few years after it opened. Alexandria has expanded a lot in the past 25 years, but the church has not been able to build in those new areas. Greater Cairo, a metropolitan of approximately 16 million inhabitants has about 90 Coptic Orthodox Churches. That means that each church in Cairo has to serve even more Christians than in Alexandria. Most of the new areas without churches are poor and many cannot afford the cost to travel frequently to one of the existing churches. People complain that the security forbids Christians to hold meetings in Christian private houses in areas where no churches exist.

It is said that some Christians are so far away from any activity of the church that they observe Muslim religious feasts. There are stories about such Christians observing fast during the month of Ramadan. In an industrial area of Cairo both Muslims and Christians, are so poor that both parents need to work but do not have the finances to bring their children to a nursery school. Even if they can afford a nursery school, often the Christian kindergarten is too far away so they will bring their children to the kindergarten of a mosque where they receive from a very early age a background in Islam. From another area, a story is told of someone who had died. The family asked a priest to come but he was delayed. So they asked the sheikh of a mosque to start the prayers. When the priest arrived they were surprised why he was upset because they saw no difference in the prayer of the sheikh and the priest. It is reported that there are even Christians who give their children Muslim names such as Mohammed or Ahmed. They do this because they grew up among a majority of Muslims and only received an Islamic education because there are no churches around them. They are illiterate so they also cannot read the Holy Bible, a book they probably know little or nothing about.

According to some priests, at least 20% of the Christians convert because their Muslim friends raised questions making them doubt their faith. Some of the questions are 'Who can guarantee that the Holy Bible has not been distorted, changed, falsified either on purpose or not on purpose throughout two thousand years? What does it mean that Jesus is the

son of God? Did God get married and have children? Is Christ a God or a Son of God? How can Christ be a God and live as a human and be in places such as a lavatory and get beaten by slaves and crucified? ~~Where~~ where was his Father when he was crucified? How can God be one and three at the same time? If Jesus is really God, who ruled the universe while he was dead? What is the destiny of those millions of people who do good deeds but God did not create them as Christians, will they perish? They also use audio-cassettes with fake stories of priests who have converted.

Poverty

The most striking element that stands out in many stories is poverty. A church worker in an industrial area of greater Cairo estimated that 60% of those who converted to Islam were suffering from poverty and they knew nothing of their own Christian faith. The remaining 40% also did not know much about their faith but were suffering from family problems. This church worker says that in none of the conversion cases he knows of physical force was used, while all families claimed it happened.

Family problems

Family problems in Christian families are a major reason for young children trying to escape from their families. Because young people are supposed to remain with their families until they marry, conversion is a way to escape from their families. Family problems and poverty are often related.

Youth and love.

The same Christian worker said there are Muslim men who try to marry Christian women because they believe the Qur'an promises paradise to every Muslim man who marries a Christian woman.

Priests in Alexandria estimate that between 60 % to 65 % of those who convert to Islam are aged of 17 or 18 years old. Priests in Cairo estimate 80 to 90% of the converts to be younger than 25 years old. Eighty percent of those converts are girls. Many of them fall in love with Muslims which is not approved of by their families, so they run away from their families and convert to Islam in order escape the control of their family. An estimated 20% convert to Islam after having had a sexual relationship with a Muslim. Sexual relationships lead to Muslims putting pressure on the Christian to convert.

Work environment

The
 + ~~same~~ same sources estimate that about 10 % of the conversion cases to Islam in Alexandria are because of pressure at work or in the army. It is said that young Christian men have erased the traditional cross tattoo from their wrists by using a burning liquid acid (sulfuric acid) while they were serving in the army in order to hide that they are Christian. Others have converted because of financial difficulties and housing problems. It is reported that some landlords have threatened to throw Christians who were not able to pay the rent out of their house unless they converted to Islam.

Divorce

Priests say that about 10 % of those who convert to Islam in Alexandria convert because they want to get a divorce. A church worker in the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Cairo estimates this percentage to be 17%. The Coptic Orthodox church in Egypt refuses to accept a divorce except if infidelity is proved. Many of those Christians who want to get a divorce cannot prove their spouses infidelity to the church to get the divorce, so they convert to Islam in order to get an immediate divorce after finishing the conversion procedures.

According to the same church worker in the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral about 3 % convert because they are seeking material gains such as a promotion, traveling abroad, or obtaining a better standard of life.

Priests believe that none of those who convert to Islam convert because they are convinced of Islam or believe in it, but they all convert because of the above mentioned circumstances. This was confirmed by an employee at the Azhar. "Most converts to Islam are young and know nothing about Islam. They convert just because they will gain certain things when they become Muslims." He showed a letter from the Saudi Arabian Embassy inquiring about a 24 year old Christian young man who after his conversion to Islam traveled to Saudi Arabia asking the Saudis for money because he forsaked Christianity and converted to Islam.

✂ The above mentioned percentages are indications of the importance of the factors involved. None of the people interviewed had precise statistics. Estimates furthermore vary from area to area and the personal experience of people who reported about converts. Most frequently a conversion is not ~~the~~ ^{the reason} ~~the reason~~ of one factor but of a combination of factors almost always involving a lack of knowledge of the Christian faith.

Pressure

Most pressure is the result of own mistakes. Pressure varies from repeatedly asking someone to convert in a situation where someone is dependent of the ones asking (work, army, etc.) to blunt force of the police or others to press someone to conversion. Sometimes it is hard to know if pressure was used or not. Many Coptic Christians tend to perceive pressure where Muslims do not perceive this. When it comes to minors below 18 years almost always pressure is claimed. Children of this age are with much less effort pressed in conversion than those who are older.

5) Return

If someone wants to return to Christianity, because the love affair ended or they are now divorced, it is impossible to officially become a Christian again. Once someone has the designation 'Muslim' on his identity card, it cannot be changed anymore.

Priests say that people may want to return to Christianity with all their hearts but they are still considered to be Muslims in the community. It also means that if that person has children, those children must become Muslims. Egyptian law states that if one of the parents is Muslim, the children must be registered legally as Muslims which means that they must receive only Islamic education at their schools.

6) Examples of conversions

In this chapter examples are given of stories of people converting to Islam. As stated before, most people convert for a variety of reasons. Still, the examples found are put in categories according to the predominant reason for conversion. There is no category for lack of knowledge of Christian faith since almost all who converted knew little to nothing about their faith.

The examples are divided in the following categories:

- 6.1) poverty; examples 1-10
- 6.2) Family problems, examples 11-16
- 6.3) Love between a Muslim and a Christian and its consequences, examples 17-30
 - 6.3.1) Love and later disappointment, examples 17-20
 - 6.3.2) Deception, example 21
 - 6.3.3) Forced marriage and conversion, examples 22-24
 - 6.3.4) Love from a Muslim woman, examples 25-26
 - 6.3.5) Initial love with Muslim; marriage with Christian, examples 27-29
 - 6.3.6) Love, promise to convert not carried out, example 30
- 6.4) Marital problems, adultery and divorce, examples 31-47
 - 6.4.1) Marriage as an escape from poverty, examples 31-34
 - 6.4.2) Marriage as an escape from family problems, examples 35-36
 - 6.4.3) Divorce rejected by the church, examples 37-38
 - 6.4.4) Husband not giving sufficient attention to his family, examples 39-40
 - 6.4.5) Marital problems between husband and wife, examples 41-42
 - 6.4.6) Adultery, examples 43-46
 - 6.4.7) Greed, example 47
- 6.5) Disappearance at work, example 48
- 6.6) Pressure to convert, examples 49-56
- 6.7) Conversion of minors, examples 57-82
- 6.8) Miracles, examples 83-89

6.1) Poverty

Introduction:

We will review some stories from different places in Greater Cairo, Alexandria and Upper Egypt to show how poverty plays a major role in leading poor Christian families to convert to Islam.

There is an area in Greater Cairo housing many different factories and surrounded by villages where the factory

workers live. These workers earn about 80 to 120 EgP (US\$ 24-36) per month and are living in very bad conditions in slum-like villages. The closest church to any of these villages is a distance of at least five km. Christian families in the villages are too poor to buy a bus ticket to go to the church. Very few priests serve the villages making each priest responsible for 500 or 600 Christian families. It is impossible for him to visit each family more than two or three times a year. That explains why poverty in area's where the church is not well represented children are brought up far from any Christian education.

On the other hand everybody, Muslim and Christian, receives a lot of education about Islam in public schools and through the media. Than it is not strange to see young girls might get attracted by and attached to any Muslim boy who shows them some care and love.

In addition to the general climate of little to no Christian education and education about Islam in schools and the media many Muslims are more active and try to attract these poor Christian families to convert to Islam. For example, many mosques in these areas have a children's nursery school opened for both Muslims and Christians for only two or three pounds per month or less than a dollar. The fee in other areas of Cairo is normally not less than 30 EgP or US\$ 9 per month. Christian families are forced to send their children to these nurseries because they have no other alternative. In the mosque's nursery, Christian children learn everything about Islam. They learn how to pray and live as Muslims and they also learn negative things about Christianity. Christian families say that they are too poor to send their children somewhere else (travel expenses and fees). The bishopric responsible for these areas says that it is too poor to buy a piece of land to build a nursery school for the Christian children. The price of one square meter in that area is 300 EgP or US\$ 90. A nursery school for 75 children needs about 300 square meters which brings the total expenses to 90,000 EgP (US\$ 26,500 or 51.000,- Dfl) for the land only. Many such nursery schools are needed.

The mosques also offer literacy classes for those who cannot read and write. These classes are free of charge and are available to both Muslims and Christians. During these classes, Muslims invite the Christians to attend meetings in the mosque and speak with them about how Islam is the right religion.

Most of the parents in these poor Christian families are working as day laborers or as factory workers. Their salaries vary from 80 EgP. to 200 EgP or US\$ 24-60 a month (It is impossible for a family of five members to survive on this salary in Egypt, for example, the minimum cost of the cheapest food for five persons a day is 10 EgP or US\$ 3). Most of these families cannot

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afford to rent an apartment, so they live in big blocks of rooms of approximately 10 to 15 square meters. Each family rents one or two rooms. Every ten rooms share one water-closet and one shower. The rent of each room is about 30 EGP or US\$ 9 per month. Some families have no income at all. An example is the family of X, consisting of husband, wife and five children (The eldest son is about 13 years old) (N: how old is the youngest son?). The father has very bad lungs which required operation. The mother has cancer. ~~Both parents are not~~ ^{are} able to work. They live in two rooms requiring a rent of 40 EGP or US\$ 12 a month and would not be able to survive without the donations (around 40 EGP, depending on family circumstances) of a Coptic charity association. Many children, both Muslim and Christian, have not been to school or did not finish secondary school because many of them have to work in order to increase their family income.

Muslim social organizations are very active in these areas. As soon as Muslims in these areas hear that there is a Christian family in need, they approach the family and offer their help. After offering their help, they tell these families about Islam.

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Saint Mary in Maadi, Cairo, set up a program to help young Christians from this area to find simple jobs in the wealthier quarter of Maadi. But this has not been without some pitfalls. Some youth have been reported to steal from households where they worked or they did not arrive for work on time. Extreme poverty often brings not only a lack of faith but the real concern is for the daily survival. Poverty coupled with the lack of a Christian background also leads to lack of ethics. Interests are often viewed in the short term. How can I get money to buy my food now instead of thinking of education. Sometimes marriage is used as a means to escape poverty at home. If the partner is a Christian it is fine; if he is not, it does not matter as long as the girl thinks it leads to improving the material conditions of life.

Sometimes Muslim neighbors or traders offer money for conversion, most often it concerns offers to pay the debts of poor Christians but sometimes it is done without this. Sometimes Christians have even asked for it. A priest says there are Christians who think they can receive money from Muslims by promising to convert. They might recite the Islamic creed to obtain the money but would not complete the procedure after having received the money they say they have changed their mind and no longer want to convert to Islam. Usually in these cases such Christians are attacked by the Muslims they deceived. They are beaten, threatened or even forced to convert. The Azhar, Islam's chief institution in Egypt, strongly rejects the use of money in conversions but some

*stated
several
times*

17
examples show that it nevertheless does happen occasionally.

Examples of Christians who converted or were about to convert to Islam because of their poverty are given.

Example 1

Factors: poverty and help provided by Muslims.

The first example concerns a Christian family, consisting of father, aged 65, mother, three girls and one boy, living in a poor industrial area. The father had been working for 22 years in a cement factory with an income in the last years of 250 EgP per month. He used to carry cement sacks and load them onto lorries. He is physically no longer able to do this kind of work. The mother works as sweeper in a hospital and earns 120 EgP or US\$ 35 a month. The eldest daughter is 18-years old and has heart disease. The boy is 10-years old and is the youngest member of this family.

The family income was not enough to supply them with their basic needs so they tried to find help from the church. The support they received was small because the bishopric is poor and priority is given to building a new church and establishing new projects for the poor. The bishop believes the project would give a number of poor work and an income and is therefore more (structural) than giving money to individual families in need. *helpful?*

A church worker who regularly visits the family says that Muslim neighbors make efforts to convert them to Islam. They have told the mother that "if you convert to Islam we will provide all your needs and you will lack nothing with us" and mother indeed has received help to make ends meet. Money and food has been given with information about Islam.

Muslims in that area have made it very visible what they are able to do. They bought an apartment in the same building where this Christian family lives for a woman who converted to Islam with her three daughters since six years ago. This woman has been very active in trying to convince the mother to convert to Islam. She has said that Muslims have always been good to her since she converted and that Islam is the right religion.

The mother has been regularly attending church meetings. She has begged and cried to the priest to help her family because the temptations to convert to Islam are so hard on her. Once she told the priest, "How can I listen to what you say in the meeting while my children are hungry, while I can't buy medicine for my sick daughter or can't buy clothes for her? What do you want me to do? Do you want me and my family to convert to Islam, or shall I work as a prostitute in order to bring food to my children?"

One time she met with the priest and told him, " I think you will not see me again." This poor family has not yet converted to Islam. But the priest, who is known to be a spiritual man, said with a broken voice, " I have done my best trying to help this poor mother and there is nothing more I can do. I will not be surprised if she one day had to convert to Islam. "

Example 2

Factors: poverty, help given by Muslims and making help conditional on converting to Islam

A Christian family in a slum area in Greater Cairo, consisting of the parents and six children, lives in one room of approximately 12 square meters. The father used to work as a day laborer, but he stop working because he fell ill. When the Muslim neighbors heard about the family's difficult circumstances, they advised them to go to the local mosque where they give money to poor families.

The first time they went to the mosque, they got 50 Egp or US\$ 15. When they went again to the mosque asking for money, they were told that " If you want to get more money, you must first convert to Islam. " A church worker heard about this and paid the mosque back its 50 Egp .

Example 3

Factors: poverty, lack of medical treatment, help offered by Muslims and insulting Christian faith.

Poverty becomes extra hard to bear if medical treatment is needed. A Christian widow (N:income?) has two daughters and one son of about 14 years old who has an encephala or swelling of the brain. He needs expensive medications. The widow's income is insufficient to pay for the treatment and the local church is not able to provide enough help.

This widow and her small family are the only Christians living in a Muslim area. Her Muslim neighbors used to help her, sometimes they bring her food, but, according to a church worker who regularly visits the family, they make insulting remarks about Jesus Christ and Christians by saying " Where is your Christ, where is your God that you are depending on, why they are not helping you ? Why do you have to tolerate this situation ? Why don't you convert to Islam and you will be very well taken care of by the Muslims ? "

Example 4

Factors: poverty, debts and money offered for conversion.

A poor family composed of a mother and five children live in a house without water and electricity. This family tried to work in trade but they failed and fell into debt of 4500 EgP or US\$ 1327. They went to church to seek help. One of the priests agreed with their creditors to pay them their 4500 EgP in a monthly installments as 250 EgP per month.

A few months later, the eldest son of the family went to the priest and told him that " the Azhar is offering us 10,000 EgP on one condition that we convert to Islam. This money is enough to pay all our debts and install water and electricity in our house. "

A few weeks later, the priest went to visit them and he found some of their Muslim neighbors working on installing water pipes inside their house. One of those Muslims said to the priest, " Why do you care about them now? You have abandoned them and now you are taking good care of them. " At that moment the priest realized that they converted to Islam.

Note: The oldest son stated that the Azhar offered 10,000 EgP on condition that they convert. There is no proof this is true. It might be that the son tried to use this argument to get money from the church and if money was offered it more likely came from their Muslim neighbors.

Example 5

Factors: poverty and stupidity.

A poor Christian family living in a village in Greater Cairo consists of both parents, two boys and three girls, one of whom is married. One of the two unmarried girls is uneducated, approximately 17 years old and had to work in a shop to supplement the family's income. The shop owner said she used to flirt a lot with boys. A church worker familiar with her case said she is looking for a relationship and doesn't care if it is with a Muslim or a Christian as long as it helps her to escape poverty.

Example 7

Factors: poverty and finding a job.

A 32-year old Christian man worked as a welder. His wife, 29 years old, has no income, and looks after their two children, a 13-year old girl and a boy of one and half years. He could not find work as a welder so he became a baker for a while and then was again unemployed. His Muslim neighbors told him it would be easier to find a job if he were a Muslim. He converted to Islam in 1992 and got a job with the neighbors' help. His wife remained Christian and they stayed married. In 1996, he also married a Muslim woman and now he has two wives. Islam allows a man to marry four wives.

Before this man converted to Islam, a Coptic charity organization and the church used to help him financially in order to prevent him from converting. In spite of all the help he got from this organization and the church which was enough to support him and his family, he eventually converted to Islam. This Coptic Charity organization is still supporting his Christian wife and their two children because his wife is unemployed and can not support her children.

The church worker showed a photocopy of the man's certificate of conversion, the marriage contract to the Muslim woman and his new identity card as a Muslim. A younger brother of this man converted to Islam too, but the church worker did not know the reason why he converted.

Example 8

Factors: poverty and money offered on condition of conversion.

A Christian father who has six children was offered a large sum of money from some Muslims, probably neighbors, if he, his wife and six children converted to Islam. The father tried to persuade his wife and children to convert to Islam, but they all refused. In the end, he gave up the idea of converting to Islam, because the money he would have received if he had converted alone to Islam was not as big as if he would have converted with all his family members.

Example 9

Factors: poverty, inability to pay a debt and offer to 'pay back' through conversion

A Christian family of parents and two children lived in a room and paid 30 Egp or US\$ 8.85 per month rent. The father had a bladder-operation and was no longer able to work. The mother worked on a sewing machine, but because they were in need of immediate cash, she sold her machine for only 70 Egp or US\$ 21 depriving her of her only source of income.

This father asked some of his Muslim neighbors to lend him money. The neighbors demanded that he would sign a blank check for them. The father signed the check and got 425 Egp or US\$ 125. Later, he had no money to pay his neighbors back. They told him that if he would convert to Islam, they would not take any money from him, nor would they give the check to the police. A Coptic charity organization heard about the situation and paid the man's neighbors their 425 Egp. He got his check and was no longer under threat to convert to Islam.

example 10 left out

6.2) Family problems

Introduction.

Family problems are often related to poverty. This, coupled with a lack of faith often leads to lack of solidarity within the family. Family members fight about each Egyptian pound to be spent. Sometimes problems occur because the family is not complete. Perhaps the father has worked abroad for a long time and has left his family behind without having made sufficient arrangements to support his family, not just financially but also in caring for their daily needs such as childcare and care for the house. Families in need try to obtain help and if they cannot find it from other Christians, they turn towards Muslim neighbors, friends and sometimes even the mosque which offers help but often mixed with an effort to convert one or more family members.

Many young Christian boys and girls, but mostly girls, especially from poor families experiencing problems, convert to Islam and marry to escape the problems. Falling in love with a young Muslim man or girl subsequently leads to more family problems. It is very rare for a boy or girl from a stable Christian family to fall in love with a Muslim. Mixed marriages are traditionally not approved by Christians in Egypt and not by Muslims if the man is Christian and the woman Muslim. Young people generally do not develop relationships against the explicit wishes of parents.

Sometimes Muslim boys make a great effort to marry a Christian girl. Promises are made of having a better

life. Such promises are especially effective if the girl comes from a family experiencing problems.

Many young men in Egypt, both Muslim and Christian, are very aggressive and flamboyant in their pursuit of girls. Some girls are not strong enough to withstand their charms. Christian girls have been known to get involved in sexual relationships with Muslim men and consequently become pregnant. When this happens, Muslim men often refuse to get married to these girls unless they convert to Islam.

Some of these weddings are reported as big celebrations or "a great triumphal procession of Islam over Christianity," in the words of a church worker. He believes that "such marriages do not last longer than a few months and in a very few cases last for a few years and then the girls get divorced. After a girl is divorced, she feels completely lost because she is no longer welcomed by Muslims and fears returning to her original Christian family.

Marriage is for many young men, Muslim or Christian, not easy. The family of the young woman expects him to provide a house and gifts for the bride. The amount of money spent depends on the social class of both the young man and woman. Incomes generally are far from sufficient to save enough money to pay for all the expenses. A young man would therefore try to go abroad to earn money or he might receive support from his family. An easy way out is for a Christian man to marry a Muslim woman. If he converts to Islam, the Muslim family is often able to raise sufficient finances in the Muslim community to make the marriage possible.

Examples are given of Christian girls who had no alternative but to convert to Islam in order to flee their families' bad treatment. Previous examples cited in the paragraph on poverty came from church workers and priests from different areas in Egypt. Example 11 is, however, different. I have met with Hanan's sister Mona and mother and spoke with a church worker and a professor of the Azhar shortly before she went to the police to finish her conversion procedure.

Example 11

Factors: poverty, family problems, Islamist group giving support, accusation that finances were paid for the conversion, lack of sufficient church support and Christian brothers threatening with revenge.

Hanan, who is 21-years old, has a mother, an older sister named Mona and two brothers. Hanan's father left years ago for Libya and never returned, nor did he maintain any contact with his family. Hanan's mother worked at home for a meager salary. She also obtained a

small but insufficient financial support from a local Coptic Orthodox Church.

"Hanan had a very difficult life in her family's home and she suffered a lot. She has very bad older brothers who took drugs, got drunk and used to beat her. This is why Hanan tried to commit suicide three times. Her brothers have a bad reputation in the area where they live " the church worker explained. "This is why she ran away with a Muslim man who convinced her he loves her. For Hanan, living with Muslims is much better than the hell she was living in before and much better than trying to commit suicide once again. "

Hanan used to go everyday to school with a 35-year old Muslim microbus driver called Atef who is living in the same neighborhood. Hanan had a good relationship with Atef and used to tell him everything about her family problems. Once Atef told Hanan that he wants to marry her, but first she needed to convert to Islam.

In January 1996, Hanan tried to escape from her family but her brothers forced her to come back the same day. They made it even more difficult for her to leave the house without their control. But five months later Hanan succeeded in running away from her family. She went to Atef who went, according to the family, with Hanan to a Muslim fundamentalist group called El Tabligh wa El Da'wa in Medinet el-Salam section of Cairo, seeking their protection from Hanan's brothers. Hanan went to the Azhar and started the conversion process by saying the Muslim creed or 'shehada' (chapter 3).

The next step was the religious counseling session of the Moduriyet el-Amn or Central Police Security Office. I met with Mona after the first session at the Central Police Security Office but before the second session. Hanan's sister Mona begged me to use my contacts to see her before the procedure would be final. She wanted to know personally from her sister's mouth that this was really her wish. I went therefore on July 3, 1996 to Dr. Bayoumi, a prominent scholar at the Azhar and a personal friend. Mona asked Dr. Bayoumi if he could "sit and speak with her to see how far she knows Islam, because I'm sure she doesn't know anything of Islam because all she wants is to just marry that guy." Dr. Bayoumi responded: "If she is doing this just for the boy's sake and not for a sincere wish to become a Muslim this would be something very bad, but there is nothing I can do for you. I understand your situation and your feelings because I myself don't like anyone from my religion convert to Christianity such as this case of that Mohammed who became Michael and the security helped him and now we let him live freely. I really wish that I could help you but I promise you that I will phone hajj Imam at the Central Police Security Office and ask him to allow you see your sister."

Hanan and her sister Mona were both active members of an evangelical organization. "Hanan was not just a Christian but she also was a good believer who really loves God. She converted to Islam because she could not tolerate our brothers' bad treatment any longer," The Central Police Security Office allowed Hanan's mother and Mona to be present at the religious counseling meeting. Mona and her mother begged Hanan not to convert. At the end of the session Hanan cried and said according to Mona, "I know what I'm doing is wrong, but I'll never go back to you again." The brothers were not allowed to be present at the session but were in another part of the building and reacted violently when they heard the conversion was final. The police had to calm them down and threw them out of the building.

Hanan's brothers were furious. "Now we have lost Hanan but what we can do is to take our revenge against those Muslims who took her with them. Mohyie (the leader of the Tabligh wa el-Da'wa group) has three sisters. We will kidnap one of them in order to break their hearts as they broke ours."

One of the family members lived very close to the extremist group's mosque in the Medinet el-Salam section of Cairo "I saw them many times after midnight hiding weapons in the mosque," he said. Family members also claimed that Atef received 40,000 EgP or US\$ 11,800 for encouraging Hanan to embrace Islam.

note: These are accusations which are most likely not true, but are used to justify the brothers' position. Revenge, in their view, was necessary but if Hanan was "kidnapped" by an extremist group with weapons, certainly no one could blame them for not carrying out their wish. Payment of money is another frequently heard argument used to justify the loss of a sister or daughter. Often, the family looks for arguments to blame the other, not oneself.

When someone from the evangelical organization was informed about Hanan's conversion, he reacted with a rather lame reply 'Well, these last months she was no longer coming to our meetings. We don't think she was a real believer'. The response is trite and does not show real love for someone who had been crying out for help. Again, like Hanan's brothers, arguments are found to blame the person involved instead of looking whether friends or family could have done more to have prevented the situation from even starting.

Example 12

Factors: love, mistreatment by Christian family, help offered by Muslims and police protection needed.

A twenty-year old Christian girl fell in love with a Muslim boy. When her family knew about her relationship with him, they locked her inside the house and never allowed her to go out alone. During one of the Christian holidays the whole family went together to church. The girl took this opportunity to run away to the house of the Muslim boy whom she loved.

When the family discovered the girl's disappearance, her uncles went to the boy's house and found her there. As soon as they saw the girl, they hit her very violently and pulled her by her hair from the third floor to the street. Many people gathered in the street to save the girl from her uncles' rough treatment. A fight broke out, all of them ended up at the police station.

The girl's family expected the police to give the girl back to them at the station. The police officer asked the girl with whom she wanted to go, her family or the Muslim family? The father of the boy, a bearded sheikh, spoke at that moment saying, "I'm willing to take the girl to my home and treat her very well as one of my own daughters". The girl told the police officer that she wanted to go to the Muslim sheikh's house. The police asked the girl's parents and uncles to sign on a document promising that they will not interfere with the girl's life anymore. Ten days later the girl married the Muslim boy. A few years later she bore a child and phoned her mother expressing her wish to meet her family but this was not realized.

Example 13

Factors: family problems and sexual relationship with the son of a Muslim neighbor.

A young Christian girl (N: age?) was living with her poor father and her young step-mother in one room. One day she had a fight with her step-mother. She left the room after the fight and moved in with a Muslim family living in the room next room to spend the rest of the day. The girl reportedly had sex with one of the Muslim family's sons. Later she converted to Islam to marry the boy.

Example 14

Factors: work offered on condition of becoming a Muslim, family problems.

A 24-year-old Christian man, who worked as a driver, was told by Muslim taxi cab owners that he could not work with them because

he was Christian. He decided to convert to Islam in order to be accepted by them and worked as a driver for a taxi owned by a Muslim man.

This young man had both parents, two younger brothers and one younger sister. Many years ago, due to family problems, his father left and married another Christian woman. (N: was this before or after the boys conversion to Islam?) In late 1996, his mother left her children and married a Muslim neighbor who was already married to a Muslim woman. The mother said that although she married a Muslim man, she had not converted to Islam and was still a Christian.

The young man's sister of 20, left the family and moved in with her mother and her Muslim step-father. The church worker who knows the family said that the girl was planning to marry one of her converted brother's Muslim friends who also works as a driver. This, despite, the fact she is engaged to a Christian man. The other two brothers (18 and 19-years-old) live together and receive money from time to time from their father.

Example 15

Factors: family problems, deception and return.

The Lost Sheep on pages 24 to 25 talks about a young Christian man who, when he was a child, used to run away from his religious family and his good school to go to his relatives in Cairo. He failed in his studies and couldn't even earn a preparatory school degree. Some people deceived him and told him that they will marry him off to a sister of a famous person whom they knew. His naivety caused him to believe all that they told him.

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This young man started to do everything they asked him to do in order to marry the girl. Fortunately some good people intervened and took him back to his father. A few years later he ran away again and converted to Islam. After he had converted he was shocked to discover that all the promises he had heard and believed were nothing but lies and deception. Eventually, he worked in loading and unloading trucks and slept inside trucks and looked like a tramp.

After he had suffered enough, he miraculously returned and his life completely changed. Now he is married and works as a taxi driver and has a stable life.

Example 16

Factors: frequent visit of girl to neighbors, marriage and a vengeful father.

Not all stories involve girls from poor families. The next story is about a 17-year-old Christian girl who belongs to a relatively rich family. Her father works in Saudi Arabia and she lives with her mother in a small block of flats which they own. They have a Muslim neighbor who is a married man and has children. This 17-year-old girl became friendly with the Muslim's man wife and used to visit her often. In the end she married her Muslim neighbor, but, as far as the church worker knows, she did not convert to Islam. The pair ran off together. Her father came back from Saudi Arabia to look for his daughter because he wanted to kill her for what she had done. He failed to find her and went back to Saudi Arabia.

6.3) Love between a Muslim and a Christian and its consequences.

Introduction:

Boys and girls who are over 12 years old are strictly separated in Egypt. A girl who is not married should not mix with boys. An unmarried girl is not supposed to go out with boys without a chaperone. But some girls might try to escape from that social custom without the family noticing it.

Having a sexual relationship before getting married is considered to be shameful to the family and can have serious consequences for the girl if her family discovers the relationship. Their punishment goes far beyond an unpleasant evening with her parents. Her family could go so far as to throw her out of the house and in more traditional Upper Egypt, they could even kill her for having had an affair.

Churches encourage their youth to marry a partner from the same church. Boys and girls can meet each other in church. They can go together on tours, for example to a monastery, and if a relationship develops, the church warns them strongly to remain pure before getting married.

Most of the love stories of Muslims with Christians, therefor concern young girls under the age of 21 who are most often not part of a Christian youth group and who do not have a strong Christian faith. If a strong Christian faith lacks, the step of marrying a nice Muslim man is not too difficult. "Why bother if we anyhow all believe in one God" is a frequently heard argument of such girls.

Most of the stories concern teenage love. Teenagers easily fall in love. They tend to romanticize a relationship without being willing to look at the consequences a relationship might have resulting later in a disappointment. The way out of a relationship and a conversion is very difficult. Some times deception plays a role but more often it is pure naiveté on the part of the girl. Girls in the Middle East are far more immature than their Western counterparts because they are less informed about the consequences of a relationship and more shielded of the world outside the family.

Sexual relationships before getting married are not accepted in Egypt's churches or in Islam. But hidden love affairs, kept in secret because the boy and girl know that parents would not approve, can result in sex. If a girl becomes pregnant she has often no way out. In Egypt's culture, the boy who is responsible for making the girl pregnant should marry her. A girl often has no choice. Hardly any other boys would be willing to consider a relationship with her because she is no longer a virgin. Muslim boys are allowed to have a Christian wife but often they want the girl first to become Muslim before they will consider to marry her.

Egyptian women who really desire to marry a certain man will do a lot to attract him. It becomes sensitive when she is Muslim and he is a Christian. Islamic law does not permit a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man. If she is only nominally Muslim, she might even go so far to have sex with him. That is

not permitted in Egyptian culture, but examples show that it does happen. If it happens, she uses this to press him to marry her and to do this he must convert to Islam. So why ~~would~~ he not do this if he is only nominally Christian?

Sometimes Christian women fall in love with a Muslim and promise to marry. Later, when they think it over, after having met with other Christians, they might change their minds and break promises. The Muslim man will almost certainly see this as deception which could result in a violent response.

6.3.1) Love and later disappointment

Example 17

Factors: love, second wife, husband beating first wife.

The book "The Lost Sheep" on pages 34-35 mentions two Christian sisters who lived near a church but rarely entered it. "The sisters used to go out together to have some fun. They started to know two young Muslim men and started a relationship with them. After a while, the elder sister had an argument with her Muslim friend, whom she loved, and left him. Later she married to a Christian man. The younger sister insisted on marrying her Muslim friend in spite of all her elder sister's attempts to change her mind.

Finally the younger sister converted to Islam and happily married her Muslim friend whom she loved. She was very certain that her husband would never think of another woman and their love was for eternity. After she bore her first child, another girl, not as pretty, started to appear in her husband's life. Her husband confessed that he married the girl because it was his right to marry again. The Christian girl was enraged and asked for a divorce. Her husband beat her, and to humiliate her, forced her to live with his new second wife.

She thought of getting a divorce through the court system because her husband married for a second time without informing her and without her approval, but she discovered that her husband's second marriage was 'orfi' which is very difficult to prove.

Example 18

Factors: love, marital problems and running away.

"The Lost Sheep" on page 39-40 speaks of a beautiful female Christian student in the faculty of medicine, who belongs to a prominent Egyptian family. She fell in love with a Muslim student. She thought that she

would never find happiness with anyone else and she refused all her Christian suitors. After she finished her studies, she left her family and converted to Islam in spite of all the protestations of her parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and priests made.

She married her Muslim friend and had a baby. As the time went on, she discovered that she was deceived by a selfish liar. Her rosy dreams had vanished. She had nothing in common with the man. She was grieved when she faced the bitter truth of her action and was tortured by the fact that nobody wanted to marry her sister because of her reputation. After a long struggle, she managed to escape the snare of marriage to the man.

Example 19

factors: marital problems and church rejected divorce.

A young Christian wife earned 5 EgP or US\$ 1.50 a day weaving products at home. Her husband would beat her every night to take money and spend it on drinking. She tried to get help from her and her husband's families, but they did not support her. She asked the church to give her a divorce, but the church refused because there was no proof that her husband committed adultery.

After she tolerated her husband's behavior for two years, converted to Islam in order to dissolve her marriage. Egyptian law states that no Christian man is allowed to marry or remained married to a Muslim woman.

Example 20

Factors: deception and love

"The Lost Sheep" on page 47 describes a situation which took place in Egypt during the seventies. A Christian man was friendly with a Muslim man who worked as a manager of a cooperative supermarket. The manager used to visit of the Christian's home a lot and spend time alone with the man's daughter a student in the faculty of agriculture. The Muslim man claimed he was helping her with her studies. He showed the girl love and succeeded in tempting her to meet him outside the house. Many people warned

the father about that manager but the father refused to listen to them saying that he had absolute trust in his daughter and in the Muslim manager. A few months later, the girl left her family and converted to Islam.

6.3.2) Deception

Example 21

Factors: deception resulting in suicide

A young blind Muslim man who was a student in the faculty of law lived alone and needed someone to read him his lessons. He asked a Christian family living in the same neighborhood to help him read his law books for him. He visited the family and a young Christian man and his sister read to him and helped him with his studies.

Later, he told the Christian girl that he was very grateful to her and her family for all the help that they had been giving him. He also told her that he liked Christians very much for they are very good and helpful people and wished to know more about the Christianity. He asked her to read Christian books to him and tell him about the Christian faith. The girl agreed and spent more time with him in order to read and tell him about Christianity.

Afterwards he told the girl that he believed in Christ and wanted to become a Christian. He also wanted to marry her, but told her he was afraid of converting to Christianity in Egypt. He said he believed the police would make it difficult for them. The girl was very happy when she heard the man's declaration and love because she had also fallen in love with him. He convinced her to first convert to Islam so that they could get married and after the marriage, they would travel abroad where he can convert to Christianity and they could live their Christian beliefs freely without any difficulties.

The girl was convinced and agreed to convert to Islam in order to marry the man. She refused to tell any one why she wanted to convert. She refused to tell even the priest who met with her at the police station for legal religious counseling. She said this was because she had promised to keep this as a secret between her and the Muslim man she loved and expected to marry.

After they married, the Muslim man kept putting off the idea of traveling abroad. After the girl bore her

first baby, she urged her husband to tell her why he postponed traveling abroad to convert to Christianity and to live there as they had planned together. Her husband finally told her that he never had the intention to do so and had only told her the story because he wanted her to agree to marry him.

She was shocked after discovering her husband's deceit. A few days later, she set a fire in their house, held her baby in her arms, and jumped from the balcony. Both she and the baby died. Some Egyptian newspapers only reported the girl's suicide with her baby after she had set her house on fire. (N: which? date?)

6.3.3) Forced marriage and conversion:

Example left out not sufficient additional information
Example 22 (geen old 44 gevonden)

Factors: ~~sexual relationship and forced marriage and conversion.~~

Example 23

Factors: love, marriage and pressure to convert.

A middle-class 20-year old Christian girl studying in the faculty of medicine fell in love with one of her Muslim colleagues. She married him but did not convert to Islam. It is said that her mother-in-law does not like her to remain as a Christian and pressures her by saying "You either convert to Islam or go back to your family."

Example 24

Factors: rape, forced marriage and conversion

A young Christian girl was raped by a young Muslim man and the girl became pregnant. The man told her that he was willing to marry her only if she would convert to Islam. The girl had to convert to Islam and got married to him. The girl felt obliged to marry the man despite or perhaps because of the shame involved in rape especially in Middle Eastern culture. She probably felt no one else would marry her.

6.3.4) Love from a Muslim woman

Example 25

Factors: Muslim woman loving a Christian man.

The Lost Sheep on pages 32 to 33 describes a young Christian man who was lived in a Christian environment, yet was deceived by a Muslim girl. The girl took him to an apartment in an isolated area. He was about to rape her, but at the last moment he felt he could not dare to do such an evil act. Although he didn't have sex with the girl, she accused him of causing her to lose her virginity. She told him that she was pregnant and that to cover his crime he had to marry her. The young man was sure of his innocence but was afraid and did not dare to speak to anyone about what had happened.

The girl kept chasing him so that he finally sought out a priest's counsel. The priest advised him to leave his family and live with any of his friends in a place where the girl could not find him. If she ever chased him again he must reject and ignore her. The young man did as he was told and lived with his relative. The girl pursued him and he firmly told her, "I didn't rape you and if you have had affairs with others, I won't bear the consequences. Moreover, I have never had sex." Immediately the girl smiled and tried to deceive him once more saying, "Did you believe what I said to you? I was only kidding. Actually the reason I told you this is because I love you." He rejected her and insisted on his position until she went away. He saved himself from the trap she had prepared for him.

Example 26

Factors: Muslim woman loved Christian man, his stupidity and entrappement.

* "The Lost Sheep" on page 33 provides an example of stupidity leading to pressure to convert people to Islam. A young Christian man graduated from the faculty of medicine and was asked to work in a hospital in Upper Egypt. During his work at the

hospital, he was chased by a nurse. He thought that it is okay to have just some fun and to spend some time with her. The nurse was not that naive and she wanted him for herself. She planned to trap him. Once, when she was alone with him, some people (probably her family) caught them together. Because of their many threats, he couldn't run away and had to convert to Islam and marry the nurse. Later, he sent many letters to his family saying that he lost himself, his family, his friends, the church and his eternity. When his father died, he couldn't even attend the funeral.

6.3.5) Initial love with Muslim; marriage with Christian

Example 27

Factors: poverty, love with Muslim man and marriage with Christian.

A poor Christian family, including both parents, two boys, two girls and their grandmother, lived in a poor village in the Greater Cairo area. The father is a teacher in an elementary school and has a very low salary. (N: how much?) The children had to work in order to supplement the family income. One of the two girls worked as salesgirl in a shop from nine in the morning until seven at night. She earned 70 EgP or US\$ 21 per month.

No meal was included in her salary. She had to remain in the shop during break times. She could not go home because this would cost her money for transportation and she could not buy enough food for herself because this would also be too costly for her.

She got to know a young Muslim man who worked in a nearby shop. She started going out with him and after a while fell in love with him. Later the young man introduced her to his Muslim family as his fiancée and his family welcomed her warmly. He expressed his love to her and promised to marry her.

The young man had to travel to Germany for work and he wanted to marry her before he left. The girl told him, "I love you and I really want to marry you, but if I run away and get married to you now, I would bring dishonor to my family which is something I don't want. Give me some time and I will find myself any Christian man to marry. After spending some time with him I will run away and come to you. Only in this way, I will not bring shame to my family." The young man agreed, but he threatened her that he would harm her family if she wouldn't marry him after his return from Germany.

During the young man's absence, the girl received a marriage proposal from a Christian man who wanted to

marry her and take her to live with him in a city that is far away from her town. But the girl was very afraid that the Muslim man might find her and harm her family if she married this Christian man, and didn't run away with him as she had promised. She went to see a church worker and told him her story. A church worker encouraged her to forget the Muslim man because she shouldn't lose her eternity and bring dishonor on her family just for him. He encouraged her to marry the Christian man and to believe that God will forgive her. The girl is engaged now and will be married soon. The Muslim young man is still in Germany. None of the girl's family, nor her future husband, know about her story. Only the church worker who gave this story knows her history.

Example 28

Factors: poverty, love with Muslim, marriage proposal from Christian man.

A Christian family living in a poor village in the Greater Cairo area has both parents, two sons and four daughters living off of a very meager income. Two of these daughters are married but they also live in poverty. Their father works in a textile factory and has a low income of approximately 150 EgP. One of the two unmarried girls had to work as a salesgirl in a shop to bring in more money for the family. She got to know a young Muslim man who used to visit and exchange a lot of phone calls with her in the shop. The girl had a love relationship with the man until one of her Christian relatives proposed to marry her. Only then, she stopped her relationship with this young man.

Example 29

Factors: love, marriage, woman ran away and returned to her family, marriage with Christian without proper divorce from Muslim, courtcase, father of woman insulted and beaten by police.

An 18-year old Christian girl had a love affair with a 23-years-old Muslim man. She ran away from her family, had a civil marriage and lived with the man in his family's house.

Later she contacted her family who assured her that they wanted her to come back home. They told her if she returned, they would not harm her. The girl ran away from her Muslim husband while she was pregnant. She got an abortion and later married a Christian.

Her ex-husband has demanded that she return to him because she is still lawfully his wife. The police

arrested the girl's father and accused him of kidnapping his daughter from her husband. Police officers insulted and beat the woman's father.

6.3.6) Love, promise to convert not carried out

Example 30

Factors: sexual relationship and loss of baby.

A young Christian girl was having an affair with a young Muslim and she became pregnant. Somehow she managed to hide her pregnancy from her family. When she was going to deliver, the young man took her to a hospital and she gave birth to a boy. He took the baby with him because he is the baby's father. The girl asked the young man to marry her and was told that he would only do so if she converted to Islam. The girl agreed to convert to Islam and started the conversion procedure.

When she went to Central Police Security Office, she found her family there and they prevented her from continuing the conversion process. They took her back with them. The young man told her that she would never see her baby again unless she converted to Islam. Once she went to him in order to see her baby, but he treated her very badly. She is now living now with her family and her baby is with the Muslim man.

6.4) Marital problems, adultery and divorce.

In several examples in this paragraph the 'orfi' marriage is mentioned. It occurs between Muslims or between a Muslim and a newly converted to Islam. But 'orfi' is not recognized by Egyptian civil law. It is therefore important to describe the different kinds of marriages in Egypt.

An 'orfi' marriage is between two people who promise each other to stay together. Sometimes there are two witnesses and a statement is written on a piece of paper, signed by the couple and the two witnesses. That is needed for the 'orfi' marriage to be recognized under Islamic law. An 'orfi' marriage is not registered and can be kept secret among the couple and their witnesses. An 'orfi' marriage gives no right to inheritance or anything else because it is not recognized by the civil authorities.

A Muslim couple who wants to get married goes to the ma'zun, a marriage official. A contract is signed and a ~~beforehand~~ agreed-upon sum is paid to the father of the bride (in Arabic 'mahr'). This sum is paid back, if the

marriage is not consummated. The couple stipulates in the contract what belongs to whom. That is important because if the couple divorces, the properties are divided accordingly. Another part of the contract is the sum a man pays his wife, if he decides to divorce her. This is mainly done among the lower and middle class. Muslims with a higher education would not do this because if the sum is high, it could force a man to remain married even if they do not want to stay together anymore. When the contract is signed the bridegroom and the father of the woman say the opening sura or chapter of the Qur'an (Fatha). The marriage is however only a fact after the first wedding night. Sometimes, for various reasons, the contract is signed a certain period before the couple starts living together. Such a contract without having consumed the marriage is sometimes compared with the engagement of Christians in Egypt.

A Muslim may marry four wives. Many do not do this, but those who do so do this without the consent of his wife. His first wife can only object, if she can prove it causes her substantial personal harm which is hard to prove.

With regard to Egyptian Christians, a Christian engagement takes place in the church and needs to be registered. The man gives gold rings and other gifts to the woman. The period of the engagement makes it possible for the man to meet the woman without her having the need to be continuously accompanied by one of the members of her family. If the man breaks the engagement, the woman keeps the gifts he gave her. If the woman breaks the engagement, she has to return the gifts he gave her. The Christian engagement in Egypt has far more value than an engagement in the West. The Arabic name for an engagement shows that. 'Nuss eklil' means half 'eklil' or half wedding.

The Orthodox Church accepts only people for marriage if the man is at least 18 years old and the woman is at least 16 years old and both have made it clear to the priest they agree to marrying the other. Below the age of 21, parental consent is needed. When a couple informs the priest they want to marry, the priest will ask the bishop, after the engagement takes place, for a permit. Wedding plans are announced and family members and others have ten days to object whereby reasons must be given. The marriage is registered by the priest who informs the civil authorities about the marriage.

Marriages before the Muslim ma'zun and in the church are registered and are thus recognized by the civil authorities.

Muslim men may divorce their wives at will, whereas women have to go to court. This is, however, not possible in the case of an 'orfi' marriage because it is not recognized by the civil authorities. In the 'orfi'

Divorce is almost impossible for a wife today.

? Exact wedding?

? Arabic? Muslim? Orthodox? Christian? ? ? ? ?

Shouldn't you get the exact legal requirements met? A lot of things to be done - Practice.

marriage, divorce is achieved by simply stating three times 'I divorce you'. There needs to be at least two witnesses if it is to be in accordance with Islamic law. In a civil divorce, the Muslim has to follow what is stipulated in the contract. The divorce is furthermore registered by the civil authorities.

The Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt does not accept divorce except in the case of adultery, whereby adultery must be either admitted or proven. Divorce is also accepted if the other partner left the Orthodox Church and all efforts to get that person back to the church have failed. Another reason for divorce is if someone has left his family and has for five years or more not informed them of his whereabouts. The church accepts divorce if someone is sentenced to prison for seven years or longer. A serious disease, threatening the life of the other partner, if the person was sick for more than three years and there were no prospects of being cured, could be another reason for divorce. If one of the partners hits the other partner inflicting heavy physical harm, this is ground for a divorce. The woman in one of the stories who set her husband's house on fire, is an example. The man survived and could have used this to ask for a divorce.

Because it is so very difficult in the Orthodox Church to get a divorce, Christian couples in Egypt go to the court if they want to get a divorce. But if the man and/or woman wants to remarry they need the church to grant them permission. If the church is not willing to approve the divorce, remarrying in the church is not possible. That accounts for numerous conversions from Orthodoxy into either Islam or another church (most often a Protestant church) to escape failed marriages.

Mixed marriages between Muslims and Christians are rejected by all churches. Muslims will accept such a marriage, if the husband is Muslim and the wife is Christian. The reason is that according to Islamic law the children take the religion of the father, not that of the mother. That explains why Muslims reject a mixed marriage of a Christian man with a Muslim woman. The practice is that Muslim men and their families ask a Christian woman to convert to Islam first before marriage, and if this is not done, more or less pressure is exerted on her to convert after she gets married to a Muslim.

If a husband in a Christian couple converts to Islam, while his wife remains Christian, the civil law does not consider them separated unless the wife asks for a divorce. If the wife is the one who converts, the judge asks the husband if he would like to convert as well to keep his wife. If he does not, the judge orders their divorce.

When a couple divorces, boys older than 9 years old and girls older than 12 years old are given to the father.

The Court's Rel. in Nature
is by Changing Rel.
the party goes to
a different Court.

But if a woman converts to Islam, the children are given to her.

Q. needed. } Mixed marriages are not approved in the churches but if it happens it is almost always the result of factors other than love. It could be an effort to escape poverty or getting away from a family with problems. Sometimes husbands have not been giving sufficient attention to their families. Adultery happens most often if the relation between husband and wife was not good and even further deteriorating. The examples given concern adultery between a Muslim and a Christian but of course adultery could also happen between two Christians or two Muslims.

6.4.1) Marriage as an escape from poverty:

Example 31

Factors: poverty, deception and marriage.

Q. A Christian man works in a factory with a salary of 90 EgP or US\$ 27 a month. He was married to a young 25-year old woman and they had four children. His wife often complained about the poverty they had to live in. A relatively rich, for her standards, married Muslim trader, living in the same area, promised her a better life if she would convert to Islam and marry him. She married the trader in secret, but three months later he had to divorce her after his Muslim wife had found out about his marriage to her. This trader was forced to marry her again, but the priest does not know who forced him to do this.

Example 32

Factors: poverty, father forced daughter into marriage, deception, divorce through conversion and return.

A poor Christian family, consisting of both parents, three boys and one girl, lives in a village, part of Greater Cairo. The father, a factory worker, had forced his 16-year old daughter to marry a widower, aged 30, with three children. After a few years of being married to this widower, she bore him three more children.

She made a little extra income for the family by working on a sewing machine to help her husband provide for their big family. She had some female Muslim customers who spoke with her about religious issues. They convinced her to abandon her husband and convert to Islam in order to find a better and easier life.

After her conversion she was threatened. She was told that if she wanted to get back some of her freedom, she must marry to a Muslim. After marrying a Muslim man and spending a few months with him, she could not bear her

situation any longer. She phoned the church trying to return to Christianity and met with a priest and telling him her story.

The priest spoke with her brothers who refused to accept her and said that they would kill her if she returned to them. Some of the church workers went to the girl's brothers and finally convinced them to accept her as God accepted the prodigal son. After she heard that her brothers would accept her, she asked a divorce from her Muslim husband who agreed to divorced her.

When she had returned to her family and to Christianity, she found out her ex-husband, got married to another woman. She lives now with one of her brothers and got her children back. The church accepted her repentance and she can take the Holy Communion but she cannot change her identity card.

Example 33

Factors: poverty, marriage and collecting money for the converted and newly wed

A poor young Christian man met a Muslim woman who agreed to marry him. He converted to Islam and when he went to the mosque in the area where he lives, the sheikh told all the Muslims present: "This man was a Christian and now he has become one of us. He is poor and needs to get married." Muslims helped him giving all the facilities to get married. He managed to collect enough money to furnish his house, something not easy accomplished for the poor or middle class.

Example 34

Factors: poverty and marriage as an escape.

An uneducated 18-years old Christian girl was from a very poor family. She tried to escape poverty and found a Muslim man offering her better circumstances. She married him after she converted to Islam. She has two children with him at present.

6.4.2) Marriage as an escape from family problems:

Example 35

factors: conversion and marriage of mother and daughter subsequently not able to find a Christian partner.

A young Christian girl (N: age?) saw her mother convert to Islam in order to marry a Muslim. Some Christian men had asked to marry the girl, but after they heard about her mother's conversion to Islam, they refused to marry her. The mother's action is

considered scandalous and shameful to many Christians in the area. The girl wanted to marry, but couldn't find a Christian man willing to do so. She also converted to Islam as she saw this as her only change to marry.

Example 36

Factors: family problems, forced out of house, married Muslim girl but conversion procedure not finished, divorce not possible because of clause of payment at divorce unavailable and application for asylum in Australia.

Maged is, a 24-years old. His mother told the story. She said her husband was a tough man who was rough with his children. Whenever Maged came back home after 10.00 at night, his father would insult him and say "It's late, go back to where you came from." He refused Maged to enter the house. Six years ago, when this happened, Maged went to his Muslim friend and ask to sleep in his house. Eventually, Maged abandoned his family and lived with his Muslim friend who convinced him to convert to Islam and marry the friends 12-year-old sister. The girl is now 18.

Maged liked the idea, so he started the conversion process and married the young, veiled Muslim girl. When Maged's father heard about what his son did, the shock left him paralyzed. Maged's mother went to him and convinced him not to continue the conversion's process. Maged now lives in his parents house with his Muslim wife. He is legally a Christian because he didn't continue the conversion's process. There are no problems between Maged and his in-law's. "They were the ones encouraging both to get married because our living standard is higher," his mother said. "They believe they will be rewarded by God for having won him to Islam. It also is not possible for Maged's family to annul his marriage contract. Maged signed that he would pay 20,000 Egp or US\$ 5900 if he divorced the girl. Maged's mother continues her story "I convinced the girl to sign a paper that she doesn't want this 20,000 Egp. but her family says the paper is worthless because it was signed when she was a minor. The girl now lives with her own family. After I leave for work, I hear her coming to Maged who tries to escape from her. When I leave, I lock the door so that Maged cannot open it when she comes." This last statement proves mother is not sure Maged really tries to escape from her or wether he is only saying so to please his mother. It is obvious that she doesn't trust her own son.

Maged has an aunt in Australia who has lived there for over twenty years. A few years ago, she helped Maged's relative to go to Australia claiming that he was religiously persecuted in Egypt. This relative was given

asylum. Now the family is trying to use the same procedure on Maged's behalf.

6.4.3) Divorce rejected by the church

Example 37

Factors: marital problems and church rejected divorce.

A young Christian wife earned 5 EgP or US\$ 1.50 a day weaving products at home. Her husband would beat her every night to take money and spend it on drinking. She tried to get help from her and her husband's families, but they did not support her. She asked the church to give her a divorce, but the church refused because there was no proof that her husband committed adultery. After she tolerated her husband's behavior for two years, converted to Islam in order to dissolve her marriage. Egyptian law states that no Christian man is allowed to marry or remained married to a Muslim woman.

Example 38

Factors: alleged adultery and church rejected divorce.

A thirty-year-old Christian tram conductor says his uneducated wife (27) was committing adultery with her brother-in-law. He tried many times to prevent his wife from going to the man but was unable to stop her. The man would beat the conductor and the wife's parents whenever they told him to stay away from the woman. The conductor decided to move to another town with his wife, hoping the man could not find her. But she permanently left her husband and went to live with her brother-in-law after stealing all her husband's belongings. Later she bore a child and claimed that the child was her husband's, but the father of the child was her brother-in-law. The conductor tried to divorce his wife but failed because the church refused to give him a divorce. A church worker reports that the refusal was probably given because he could not proof adultery. He finally converted to Islam in order to divorce his wife. He knew this route would be easy and possible once he became a Muslim.

6.4.4) Husband not giving sufficient attention to his family

Example 39

Factors: marital problems, stupidity of Christian husband, adultery, deception by Muslim neighbor,

'orfi' marriage with neighbor and return to the church.

The book, "The Lost Sheep" also gives examples of conversion because marital problems. Pages 13 and 14 of the book illustrate an example of a Christian who converts to Islam "because of her need for passion and love." A translation is given of the story.

A Christian wife lived with a selfish husband who did not care about her. Her husband used to spend most of his time going out with his friends. Instead of staying at home with his wife and children, he often invited his Muslim neighbor to chat and play backgammon. For him, his wife was just an object to answer his demands and to satisfy his needs without giving her any kind of love or compassion.

The husband did not even care about buying the things his family needed, but he let his wife do everything. He even asked her to accompany their Muslim neighbor when he went out to shop.

The wife often went out shopping with the Muslim neighbor who started to show her kindness, care and love. A kind of unholy passion began between her and the neighbor. Eventually she betrayed her marriage vows.

When the husband felt that his wife had betrayed him, she immediately left the house to live with the neighbor. She converted to Islam. Since then, her former husband will not dare to come near.

The Muslim neighbor married her in an 'orfi'-marriage arrangement, so that he is not financially obligated to her. After that marriage, he showed his real self to the woman. All the kindness, care and love of the past disappeared. He did not view her as his spouse, but as a dishonest person who was unfaithful. He asked her to find a job so that he could financially benefit from her and he treated her badly. Finally the woman found out that she again was nothing but a toy for this man to play with in order to satisfy his desires.

Later the woman met a Christian who led her to the church. She met with a priest and told him, "I no longer need anything, I don't need my first husband nor the second. All that I need is to be a member of such a happy community as the church where I can find those who care and love each other."

note: The aim of the story is obvious. Christian men are instructed that they should give attention to their family. If they don't do this, consequences can be very serious as witnessed in this case.

Reported
evidence

Example 40

Factors: stupidity of Christian husband, deception of Muslim neighbor, adultery, divorce and document of non-interference.

Another story from the book, "The Lost Sheep" from page 48 and 49 is about a Christian man who had a very good relationship with his Muslim neighbor. He had the opportunity to travel and work abroad and instead of going to the church to ask the priest or any of the church leaders to take care of his wife and children during his absence, he entrusted their care to his Muslim neighbor.

During the husband's absence, the Muslim neighbor visited the man's wife and children a lot. Eventually the wife had an affair with the Muslim neighbor. When the Christian husband came to spend his yearly holiday with his family, his wife acted very normally with him. He did not have any doubts in her behavior or that of his neighbor.

Some years later, the husband decided to stop working abroad and returned to Egypt dreaming of settling down and having a better life with his family. When he came back, he found that his wife had converted to Islam and had married his neighbor after robbing him of all his money he had sent from abroad. He also had to sign a document promising that he would not interfere with her.

note: Many Egyptian men travel abroad for some time to make a larger income. It is not strange, in this example, for this man to do this. But it is strange that he left the care of his wife and children to a friend. In cases of Egyptian friends I know who have traveled abroad, they always asked their close family to take care of their wives and children. Perhaps the family was not living in the same city. The message of the church is at least 'if you travel, ask the church for help.'

6.4.5) Marital problems between husband and wife

Example 41

Factors: marital problems, adultery and conversion.

"The Lost Sheep" provides another example on pages 36 and 37 about a female Christian university graduate who has a remarkable job and who was outwardly committed to the church. Although she had a high living standard, two children and could lead a stable life, she rebelled against her husband so that they had trouble with each other. For many years, she attacked her husband by beating and biting him. Many times she tried to give him a deadly strike.

She went astray and had one relationship after another with young men until she was caught by the vice squad and investigated by the police. She entered into another relationship with a younger man, converted to Islam, and lived with him. She took the children from their father to nurture them and demanded that he pay her 400 EgP or US\$ 118 a month as a alimony. She demanded that he leave his big apartment for her as well.

note: This story shows Christian women that if they have a problem with their marriage, they should go to the church. They cannot find a solution to their marriage problems by going to other men.

Example 42

Factors: marriage problems, promotion and wife offered if converted, return and police investigation with torture.

A Christian employee earning an income of around 400 to 500 EgP or US\$ 118 to 148 per month had difficulties with his Christian wife. Some female colleagues told him that if he would convert to Islam, he could get a promotion and move to higher position at his work. Those Muslim colleges also promised him that if he would leave his wife for the sake of Islam, they would give him a Muslim woman to marry. He converted to Islam and only a week after his conversion, (H. this concerned abuna Armia. Did he complete the procedure in only one week time? Or did he only say the shehada?) he decided to become a Christian again. He apologized to the church and asked to be accepted back. The church received him again, but he feared going back home and went

into hiding. The police wanted to know where he went, so they arrested some family members and tortured his brothers to find out where the man was hiding. The church intervened and spoke with all parties involved. The police refrained from harming any of his family members after they discovered where he was hiding.

note: It was mentioned the conversion was done in one week. That is an indication the Islamic creed was said but that the formal procedure as described in chapter 3 was not finished. That also explains why the police, after investigating the matter, left him alone.

6.4.6) Adultery

Example 43

Factors: adultery, marriage and divorce.

"The Lost Sheep", pages 44 to 45, talks about a young Christian agronomist who is married to a pretty university graduate who served as a Sunday school teacher. The young man worked in tourism. When Egypt's tourist industry suffered from extremist attacks he changed his career and worked in a pharmacy owned by his sister in a quiet area. He left his service in Sunday school and his spiritual life got weaker and weaker. During that time there was a very pretty young Muslim woman who used to visit him often in the pharmacy. After he had sex with that woman, she and some other people kept putting pressures on him to marry her. Because of the hard pressures and the many threats he had from them, he abandoned his family and converted to Islam in order to marry the woman.

Later when he wanted to divorce her, he had to pay a very large sum of money and give up some of his property to her. A few months after he had divorced her, he was surprised that she opened a court case against him because she bore a child and demanded a monthly alimony to support the child. Before the court decided how much money he should pay as an alimony for his child, the child died, so the court case closed.

Note: The church's message is clear: "Don't fool around."

Example 44

Factors: adultery, stupidity, group of Muslims threatening him to convert and if that is not done, family members will be harmed.

This story was not told by a church worker or a lawyer but by the person himself. Adel is a Christian man of about 45 years old. He lives in poor quarter of Cairo, is married and has six children. Some years ago he quit his job in the Egyptian railway company and started his own business in trading. He used to travel to the free-zone areas in Port Said and Qantara to buy goods and sell them in Cairo. One day while he was traveling to Port Said he met a widow who was doing the same kind of business. At the end of the day the woman forgot one of her suitcases. Adel found the suitcase. He didn't know the lady's address and thus took it and sold the goods he found in it. After a long period of time Adel met the lady again accidentally again during one of his trips. He told her that he had found her suitcase and sold all its goods and gave her the money he got for it. The woman told Adel that she admired his honesty and that she wished to work with such an honest man. She suggested that they would work together as partners and Adel agreed.

After they had worked together for some time she told Adel that she liked him very much and would like him to marry her younger sister. Adel did not say anything but invited her to his house where he introduced the woman to his wife and children. He told her he has his own family.

Adel said that after some time the woman tried to seduce him. She said she wanted to marry him and suggested "Why don't you convert to Islam in order to marry me?" Adel told her "I'm willing to do anything for you except convert to Islam because I'm a Christian and I love my religion." They decided to live together as man and wife but without marriage. Adel bought a new house in order to spend time with this woman. She introduced him to her daughter and son-in-law as her husband. Adel's wife, however, did not know anything about this relationship, except for business. Adel said his relationship with the woman lasted many years and during that time their business grew. They opened a shop together and she tried from time to time to talk about conversion, but Adel says he always refused.

One day Adel's wife found out his sexual relationship with his business partner. She went to his shop and met with the widow's daughter and son-in-law and said: "How could your mother do such a thing. How could she take a Christian man from his Christian family and live with him like this?". The widow tried to justify her situation before her daughter and son-in-law saying: "

This man is my husband. He converted to Islam. He is no longer a Christian but he's afraid to tell his wife that he converted to Islam." They asked to see Adel's identity card to believe whether or not he is really a Muslim. The widow urged Adel to convert to Islam because of the difficult situation but he strictly refused saying that he's a Christian and will never ever convert to Islam, no matter what happens. The widow asked, "what about falsifying an identity card, stating that you are a Muslim." He said : " I don't mind if you have someone make a false identity card for me as long as I do not have to put my own fingerprint on it." And the plan was carried out.

One year later, the widow suggested to Adel to make a false marriage contract in order to show it to her family in case they asked for it. Adel said that he would not mind having a false marriage contract as long as he did not have to sign it. And so they falsified a marriage contract. The widow tried again and again to persuade Adel to convert to Islam but he refused.

One day Adel found out that the widow sold their shop without his knowledge and took all the money for herself. Adel could not find her but at a certain moment she sent a messenger saying that she wanted to see him. Adel went with the messenger to the place where he was supposed to meet her. Instead of finding her he found a large group of bearded Muslim men. They threatened him to convert to Islam or they would harm him and his daughters. Adel managed to escape from them. He has been living as a fugitive for a long time and fears that if they would find him, they would harm him and his daughters. They told him that if he wouldn't convert to Islam, they would kidnap his daughters. In April 1997 Adel was back with his family, an awful experience richer. None of his family members were harmed.

Example 45

Factors: adultery, love and marriage.

of his wife
A 35-years old Christian man is married to a Christian woman 5 years her junior. They have two daughters and a son. His eldest daughter of 10 is infected by infantile paralysis. He had a sexual relationship with an unmarried Muslim neighbor. He eventually converted to Islam because he was in love with the girl and wanted to marry her.

Example 46

Factor: adultery

A 50-year old married Christian had no children with his wife and began a sexual relationship with a neighbor Muslim widow who has a 26-year old daughter. To be near this Muslim widow, he converted to Islam and married her daughter. His Christian wife separated from him.

6.4.7) Greed

Example 47

Factors: greed, family problems, daughter trying to kill her husband, adultery, marriage to a Muslim, money for conversion, wish to return.

"The Lost Sheep" on pages 20 to 22 gives an account of some members of a Christian family who converted to Islam because of their greed of money.

"A Christian man lived in a small village, working as a fruit dealer. He has six children. After his wife died, he married for a second time and his new wife bore two other children for him. This man lived near the only church in the area. Every time he "cried" poverty, the church and the Christians in the village helped him, especially because they knew that there were some Muslims trying to tempt him to convert to Islam by offering to give him land and cattle if he converted.

Because this man had not built his family on the rock of a strong Christian faith, his elder son converted to Islam while he served in the army. Later, this son died during his military service.

Although the church had provided his elder daughter with everything she had needed for her wedding he complained that the church had not given him enough. He also kept inciting his daughter against her husband and pitted against him. The daughter listened to her father. One day she offered her husband a cup of tea with sleeping pills stirred in the brew. While her husband

was in a deep sleep, she poured kerosene over his body and lit it on fire. She left the house quickly after she locking the main door ensuring that her husband, even if he awoke, could not flee. She went to her father.

Fortunately the neighbors broke into the burning house, rescued the husband and took him to a hospital. Although he still suffers from extreme physical disabilities, but he never accused his wife of burning him.

This daughter did not want to listen to the church's advice nor that of the village. She went out a lot claiming that she was working. When the church and the village tried to reconcile her with her husband, she ran away with a young Muslim man. Several months later, she appeared again in the village with her new Muslim husband.

Meanwhile, her father did not stop asking the church for money and it helped him. Unfortunately he took the money to buy cigarettes and gamble with his Muslim friends. It seemed that he was enjoying playing off the church and his Muslim contacts. Eventually he made a deal with some Muslims that if he and all his family converted to Islam, he would receive a large sum of money. He started by himself and converted to Islam. His Muslim friends took him from one village to another collecting money for him as a new convert to Islam. His Muslim friends refused to give him all the money which they collected because his wife and children refused to convert to Islam and left him. They only gave him a certain amount of the money and kept the rest for themselves.

Several months later he wept openly before the church begging his wife and children to return to him. This happened after his Muslim friends had "helped" him marry a woman with a bad

reputation who managed to take everything he owned: his house, his cart and his donkey.

6.5) Disappearance from work

Stories are told about Muslim colleagues encouraging Christian colleagues at work to convert to Islam. Sometimes Christian employees do indeed convert, especially in situations where the Christian is the only Christian among many Muslim colleagues. In example 14 someone was convinced by colleagues at work to convert to Islam because of family problems. Stories are told that sometimes promotion is denied unless someone converts. Occasionally even Christians do not return from work and the family is told not to interfere because they had converted as happened in example 48.

Example 48

Factor: sudden disappearance followed by a claim the woman converted

Marcel William Armanyouth wrote a letter to Mr. Maurice Sadek about his sister Marian who suddenly disappeared.

"On 4/6/1996, my sister Mariam went as usual to her work in the Egyptian Antiquities Organization but never returned from work. When we phoned her colleges at work, they told us she took a holiday for 10 days and nobody knew where she was. Ten days later, I went to my sister's office trying to find her. Her manager told me that she came and extended her holiday for 16 days more days from 15/6/1996 to 2/6/1996. I received a telephone call from someone called Mrs. Sueria who told me that my sister had converted to Islam and that I shouldn't look for her anymore and I should leave her alone.

Later, I found out that there had been certain people my sister used to spend time with at work. They are Mrs. In'am in the holidays department, Mr. Nabil in the personal affairs department, Mr. Mamdouh in the employees affairs department and Mr. Mahmoud in the accounting department. Mr. Mahmoud used to bring books to my sister. Mr. Mamdouh used to speak a lot with my sister.

I received a lot of telephone calls telling me that my sister now lives with Mrs. In'am, Mr. Nabil and Mr. Mahmoud. I was threatened by a call that if I tried to cause any trouble to the people who took my sister, they would hurt someone in my family. On 17\6\1996, my brother informed the police about my sister's disappearance and he had a police minute recorded.

6.6) Pressure to convert.

Introduction

In the previous chapters we saw already examples of pressure as a result of people's own mistakes. Love, and especially a sexual relationship with a Muslim woman, can lead to pressure to marry. A Muslim woman cannot be married to a non-Muslim so there is pressure to convert. Other forms of pressure result from own mistakes combined with religious sentiments. Example 49 provides an example here. Example 50 recounts the story of someone who was extremely naive and entered into very difficult circumstances. Example 53 shows that if someone advises someone else not to convert to Islam, it can lead to pressure. Two other stories are examples of naiveté as well. Example 54 shows that young people who lack the support of fellow believers are easier to be pressured into conversion than others. These examples show that pressure could have been avoided if these Christians would have been more careful and aware of the cultural environment in which they live. This, however, does not justify the pressure which was exerted on them. The information obtained for examples 55 and 56 show that it sometimes happens that pressure was exerted without apparent mistakes at the side of the Christian. The police in example 55 apparently did not verify the girls claims and forced the boy into marriage and conversion. In example 56 a letter of debt was falsified apparently to force someone to convert.

Example 49

Factors: problems between neighbors introduce religious arguments, imprisonment of Christian family for a period of six months seems strange.

Human rights lawyer Maurice Sadek published a story about 77-years old Wanis Swaiha Mikhail. It is very unusual to have a conversion story which involves such an old man even in a tangential manner.

According to Sadek, Wanis Swaiha's story started when Colonel Salah el-Azizy, chief inspector of the Shubra el-Kheima district of Cairo, asked Magdy Botros Morkos, a 28-years-old carpenter to come to his office. El Azizy asked him why he had not converted to Islam as he promised some Muslims he would do after he had received money from them. Magdy said Mr. Wanis Swaiha, his neighbor, advised him to change his mind and had sent some religious men to persuade him to give up the idea. Colonel el-Azizy went to Mr. Swaiha's house and arrested his sons Abd el-Messiah Wanis, aged 52, Swaiha, aged 32, and his sons-in-law Shokralla, 49-years old, Noshy Shehata Gorgy, 53-years-old and a visitor Sadek Shokry Roshdy, aged 22. Magdy Botros and the people arrested were sent to the industrial jail in Abu Za'bel, Cairo.

Egypt has been under a state of emergency since Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981 until the present time. The emergency high national security court section 30 of the southern Cairo court decided on 4/1/1994 to release them, but this was only carried out four months later which is six months after they were arrested.

Sadek did not publish all the information in his files. His files contain a letter of complaint from Mr. Swaiha's son, Milad, who was not arrested (he was probably not involved - CH) to Mr. Rif'at el-Sa'id, Secretary-General of the Tagamu-Party, an opposition political party in Egypt. He wrote that the problems started on 13/11/1993 with a fight between children (probably these 'children' were not too young - CH) of two Christian families. Someone phoned the police and said that there was a fight between Christians and Muslims which Milad denied. A police car full of Central Security troops arrived and arrested Wanis Swaiha Mikhail, two of his sons, aged 52 and 32, two sons-in-law, aged 49 and 53.

Milad wrote that the next day the two fighting parties reconciled. They had to go to the prosecution to finish the investigation and the prosecution decided to release them all. But the Shubra el-Kheima Second Police station did not release them and sent all of them to Central Police Security Office in El-Qalyubia. They remained there for ten days. Everyday they were promised that they would be released. Suddenly all of them were transferred to the industrial jail in Abu Za'bal, Cairo. This incident is recorded in the minutes no. 1338/93.

According to Milad, some people encouraged his neighbor Mr. Magdy Markos Botros, with whom they had a fight, to claim that he wanted to convert to Islam and that Milad's father sent him some Christian religious men to persuade him to change his mind. "This is absolutely not true, but my neighbor thought that by claiming this the police will help him and take his side against my

brothers." Milad finishes his letter by stating that he believes that "the only aim of all these police procedures against my brothers was to force them to change their belief." (from Christianity to Islam - CH).

Note: It is difficult to assess this story. It is not uncommon for Christians to argue with relatives or friends if they consider conversion to Islam. But it is equally possible that someone, who has very little faith (Muslim or Christian) to use religious arguments to strengthen his position in a conflict which has nothing to do with religion. It is, however, highly unusual for a Christian to claim he thought of becoming a Muslim in a neighborhood conflict with other Christians. If it was really true that he thought of becoming Muslim, why would he allow himself to be convinced by a neighbor with whom he had a conflict not to convert? (N: check with Sadek if he knows if Magdy indeed converted to Islam).

Example 50

Factors: naiveté, deception, stupidity, extremists, money paid after saying the Muslim creed, bride given ('orfi'), violence, followed by extremists and tortured by the security.

A church worker provided this story about Milad, who is now 21, and his mother. The church worker asked to change the name and places in this story.

Milad was a 19-year-old Christian boy when he was deceived by an extremist Muslim group to convert to Islam. The story is an example of how young poor Christian boys can easily be attracted by money and sex to convert to Islam. It demonstrates the consequences they face if they give promises to Muslims to convert to Islam and later break these promises.

Milad, a stammerer who has difficulties to express himself well, lived with his family in one of Cairo's slum area's. In October 1995, while sitting in a cafe in the city bazaar Milad met a group of bearded Muslims who introduced themselves in a kind way and asked his name. Most names in Egypt, including Milad's, make clear one's religion. These people therefore knew Milad was a Christian. They spent sometime with him and were very nice and friendly to him.

The same group went to see Milad again the next day in the same cafe. They invited him to visit their home and Milad agreed to go with them. They took him to a house in Giza. They were very friendly to him and started to convince him that Christianity is a wrong religion and

Islam is the right one. They let him listen to the tape of an alleged conversion of a Christian priest (the tape is available; a translation of the entire tape is given in addendum **) They also gave him money which he accepted. After more meetings, they managed to convince him to convert to Islam. He agreed and said the Islamic creed before them. On 07\11\1995, they gave him an 18 years old virgin to marry. The marriage was a so-called 'orfi' marriage which has no validity according to Egyptian civil law.

Milad spent almost two months with that girl, or wife as his Muslim 'friends', called her. Milad is not sure she became pregnant or not. These months were spent in the house in Giza. During that period, they gave Milad a lot of money. Milad says he received 100 EgP or US\$ 30 per day on average, which is in Egypt an unbelievably large amount of money. They applied for an identity card for Milad because he never had an identity card before and obtained it in one day. My friend says this would have been impossible if they would have followed the normal legal procedure for issuing an identity card in Egypt. Milad's father also died during those two months.

They told him that as a Muslim he must remove the cross tattoo on his wrist. They scraped the cross tattoo off with a knife. They took Milad to the Azhar to say the Islamic creed in order to go through the legal procedures of conversion.

After they had trusted Milad and were sure that he became one of them, they started to teach him other things. They taught him how to follow someone and how to know if he is followed and how to escape if he is being followed by someone. They also taught him how to use guns and how to shoot randomly in a way that can cause as much damage as possible. Milad said these people were involved in an attempt to blow up jewelry shops by using a car loaded with 150 kilograms of dynamite. He also said that there are people in the government supplying the group with information and help.

Later, Milad was taken by the group to the Central Police Security Office to make the second step of his conversion process. Milad had to attend a Religious Counseling Session where he met with a Christian who wishes to remain unknown. A second session came and the Christian he met assured Milad that he will protect him if he would decide not to continue the conversion process. Milad trusted this man, decided not to finish the procedure and escaped from the group where he stayed.

Milad went into hiding in December 1995 because he was afraid people from this group would find him. This time, Milad got two crosses tattooed, one on his wrist and the other on his thumb. After a month he went back home, expecting the group would have forgotten about him.

One day he was seen by some members of group. They beat him so hard that he was bleeding. People in the street intervened and rescued him. After this incident, Milad went again into hiding for six months. In June 1996, Milad returned to Cairo to take his school exams. He arrived in Cairo one week before the exams. Because Milad was frightened some people of the group might see him, he entered his mother's house after midnight. At 3 a.m., the telephone rang. His younger sister answered and thought it was one of their relatives trying to hassle her. Milad took the receiver from his sister and tried to speak. After the caller heard Milad's voice, he put down the receiver immediately. Milad suspected that the caller was not a relative, but a member of the group verifying Milad's presence in the house. Milad was extremely terrified and immediately fled. He jumped in the first microbus he could find (on some of the main roads minibuses run all night). Unfortunately two people followed him and they got in the same microbus he was on. They caught him when he left the microbus and tried to stab with a pocketknife. Luckily, he was hit in the arm instead of his side (the wound in his arm is 8 cm. long). They also hit his right eye. They could not hit him again because the microbus driver and the passengers intervened and rescued him.

A week after the attack, Milad had to go to school to take his exams but he was extremely afraid they would try to harm him again. When he left school, a car stopped at the school's gate. The door opened and he saw one of the extremists holding a gun. He ordered him to get in. Milad was frightened and did not resist. They took him to an unknown place where he was beaten. They told him, "A Christian like you can never make fun of us, either you continue the conversion's process or you will be killed. They then gave him two injections. (needle marks were at the time of the interview still visible). After he woke up he found his thumb and wrist bleeding because the two cross tattoos were erased by cutting his skin with a knife. Somehow Milad again managed to run away and he went again into hiding.

Milad and his family did not inform the police about the extremists because they were so frightened that they would harm Milad's mother and sisters if they knew the police had been notified.

In November 1996, Milad was in a microbus travelling to a wellknown church. It stopped by a normal police road check. A policeman searched Milad's pockets and found a paper with his story. The policemen took Milad to the State Security Police (Mabahes Amn el-Dawla) in their city where they kept him under arrest for 12 days. The police tortured him to obtain information about the extremist group mentioned in his story but Milad refused to say a word. Milad said he witnessed terrible things

in the State Security. Almost all who were arrested with Milad were Muslim extremists. His account follows:

- Every midnight prisoners were taken from their cells blindfolded to stand before the officers for interrogations.

- Standing before the officers, they remained blindfolded and were stripped of all their clothes.

- They were electrified by putting wires on the most sensitive parts of their bodies such as the penis, armpit, etc.

- Their hands were tied behind their backs and they were hanged from the ceiling.

The space between their feet and the floor was over a meter in order to tie

their feet and attach it to a heavy gas pipe (The average weight of the gas pipes in

Egypt is between 30 to 40 kg.). While the prisoners suffered from this

extremely painful stretching of their bodies, they were also beaten on their backs with whips and sticks.

- One of the most horrible methods of torture was inserting the hose of a gas pipe

into a prisoner's anus and letting the gas pass through the hose into the prisoner's body. After the prisoner's stomach was blown up with gas, they would remove the hose to let the gas leave the body. While the gas was going out of the body, the police would light a fire so the prisoner's buttocks and back are stung by the fire.

- Some of the prisoners' nails were removed.

- Some were put in a cell with over a meter of sewage water.

- All the prisoners received only one meal a day at around 6 PM. This meal

consisted of a small plastic bag of beans and two loaves.

For a schoolboy from secondary school with no connection to any human rights organization, the things he saw were described with remarkable detail. Nevertheless, Milad's fear of the extremists was greater than of the police. He was far too afraid that if he told the police about this extremist group. It might find out that he was the one who provided the information about them and they would kill him. For the twelve days Milad was tortured, he only told them that the story they found on him is not real, but imaginary.

Milad is again free but did not move a lot around in the city where he lived. His fear of both the extremists and the police is far too great. Milad is psychologically unstable. He has lost his self-confidence. His own family has made his recovery difficult by calling him a failure and blaming him for the things happened to him. On March 25 Milad left Egypt for another country where he hopes to be able to build up a new life.

Example 51

Factors: unaware of signing a marriage contract.

A Christian girl worked in a shop in an industrial area where there was a Muslim salesman. One day, this salesman brought goods to the shop as usual and the girl had to sign for receiving them. He inserted a marriage contract between the receipts. The girl signed on all the papers without realizing that there was a marriage contract between them. Later when the girl found out that she had been tricked, she ran away to her relatives in Alexandria. The Christian owner of the shop tried to negotiate with the young man and gave him money in order to tear up the marriage contract, but the young man refused and said "No, she is my wife and I'm not going to leave her." The church worker who told this story said that he heard that the salesman had a friend who was a lawyer and that this man drew up the marriage contract for him.

Example 52

Factors: naiveté and deception.

The Lost Sheep on pages 25 to 26 gives the story of a simple Christian girl who lived in a slum-like area. She was asked one day by her Muslim neighbor to help her clean and furnish his brother's apartment who was about to marry. The girl naively went with a big group to the apartment and while she was furnishing the bedroom, individuals from the group started to leave one after one giving different excuses. The girl finally found herself alone with her neighbor's brother who started to speak nicely to her about his brother getting married and about how much he loves his brother. He started to speak about himself and

of his wish to marry her. The girl barely managed to get out of the difficult situation, but she learned a lesson that she will never forget.

note: In Egypt girls and women should never stay alone with a man in a room or house. The girl should have left when the others also left. It is not just a publication in a book. These things do happen. I have experienced a more a less similar situation with a married Christian man trying to be alone with an unmarried Christian women

Example 53

Factors: threats after having advised someone not to convert to Islam

Mr. Maurice Sadek received a written complaint (N: date?) from a girl named Inaas, from Shubra in Cairo about a man Yasser, who lives in the same building. "He always follows me on my way up and down the stairs. He hits me and threatens to throw liquid acid in my face if I do not give up my belief in Christianity and marry him. He asked me many times to go along with him and convert to Islam. When I refused and scolded him, he hit me. Once he hit my brother Kamal inside our house in front of my parents, but none of us dared to stop him because he has misused medical drugs."

Inaas continued her complaint "Yasser asked Alla, a coffee shop owner who is involved in a group of very bad people, to stop me every time in the street by force. They also hit my brother Kamal who has heart disease. There is no one who dares to stop these people because they are really bad and dangerous. Please help me and my brother, we just want to live a normal quiet life as everyone else."

No further explanation was found in Maurice Sadek's files but Inaas is related to the story of A (example 67). It is said that people bother her because she was the veiled woman who met with A and told A it was not good to convert.

Example 54

Factor: seeking to please comrades in the army and pressure.

"The Lost Sheep" on page 31 and 32 gives an example of a young Christian man who came from a good family. He loved his family very much, had no tendency to do wrong and was very handsome, polite and shy.

The man had to do his military service in a remote area of the country and there he was subjected to pressure from his army mates because he was the only Christian in his brigade. In order to satisfy his mates, he agreed to apply for a formal request to convert to Islam from the military intelligence. His commander and his mates were very pleased with him. The intelligence sent for him to know why he wanted to convert to Islam. On his way to the intelligence office, he stopped in Alexandria to see his family. He ran into a church worker and told him about his plans to convert. The church worker took him to a priest who convinced him not to convert. The priest told him that no matter how long his service in the army would be, it would be finished. He said that he should not give up his belief and abandon his church and his family.

The young man was convinced with what the priest's words and went to the intelligence office telling them about how he was put under pressure to convert to Islam. He went back later to his brigade and lived with dignity and strength witnessing for Christ.

note: the story doesn't say what kind of pressure. Most likely his comrades asked him to convert and he wanted to please them. It happens a lot that Muslims ask non-Muslims to convert. If someone is young, repeated questioning could be felt as pressure.

Factors: alleged accusation of sexual relationship and police accepting the girls story apparently without sufficient evidence. Conversion and marriage forced by police with a marriage contract stipulating payment of a large sum of money upon divorce.

A church worker in Alexandria gave two examples of Christian boys who were accused by Muslim girls of having sex with them. In both cases the police believed the girls without, according to the priest, having evidence. In both cases, the police forced the boys to convert to Islam and marry the girls. The aim of the police was to force them to marry but because a Muslim woman cannot marry a Christian man, conversion was forced upon the boys as well. In both cases, they had to sign a marriage contract and promise to pay large amounts, in one case 10,000 EgP or US\$ 2950 and the second one 15,000 EgP or US\$ 4425, if they were to divorce the girls. Both boys made arrangements with the girls' families to divorce the girls. The priest, however, said that becoming a Muslim legally means that you can no longer legally live as a Christian in Egypt. The boys cannot marry in a church. Hardly any Christian girl would even consider them. If they do marry and have children, they could not raise them as Christians nor allow them to have a Christian education in their schools.

Example 56

Factors: alleged falsification of a letter of debt and using this to force someone to convert to Islam, lack of police protection, conversion procedure not finished.

A widow lived in the Mokatam section of Cairo with her three sons and one daughter. Her eldest son is 26 and the youngest children are still in primary school. They lived in a place which was not their own. The government decided to demolish it because it was build on governmental land without legal permission. The mother works a housemaid earning 80 EgP or US\$ 24 a month.

The eldest son borrowed 150 EgP or US\$ 44 from some Muslim neighbors and signed a paper promising that he would return the money. The neighbors changed the amount of the loan by adding two zeros to the end, making it 15,000 or US\$ 4425 instead of 150. They threatened the boy to either convert to Islam and the whole loan would be dropped or go to prison. The boy had no choice, but to convert to Islam. He went to the Azhar and said the 'shehada' or Islamic creed. After he had said the Islamic creed and took the paper he signed and he refused to continue the conversion process. He ran away. The neighbors and the police caused troubles for his family (what kind of troubles is not known) for a while

till a church worker managed to buy them an apartment in an area which is very far from Mokatam.

6.7) Conversion of minors

Introduction

A special category is the minors and this almost always involves claims of force being used. In most cases studied, the girl or boy tried to escape their own family with which they felt unhappy. Sometimes teenage love was involved.

Culturally, Christian parents would not permit their daughters to marry Muslims. Conversion and subsequently marriage is a way girls escape the control of their own families.

Muslim police officers usually force parents to sign a document promising that they will not interfere in their minor daughters' lives anymore. Human rights lawyer Maurice Sadek has been dealing with most of these types of cases. These are also the cases for which he uses the term, "kidnapping," because the girls involved were minor and should have remained under the custody of their parents until their 18th birthday. None of the examples found, however, were physically kidnapped by Muslims. That would involve being physically taken off the street and forced into a conversion and marriage. After the girl has made a decision to leave her family and convert, cases show that often pressure is exerted on her if she hesitates about what she has done. The way back is then very difficult.

Children below 16-years old cannot go through the official conversion procedure. If they run away from home, often because of family problems, they go to the police and claim they want to become Muslim. Christian families always try to get them back home. But the police refuse to do this if the girl refuses to return or if the girl is encouraged to refuse to return. The police provides them "protection" and places them in a Muslim family in their area. After they have become 16, they go through the formal conversion procedure.

Christian families who lose a child often threaten revenge which is, however, rarely carried out. But these threats give the police the justification to pressure Christian families and their priests to sign documents of non-interference. With such pressure these families give up their custody over the child.

The following examples of conversions of minors are given:

Example	boy or married	date of formal conver-	dis- age at	date of
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The following examples of conversions of minors are given:

Example number	boy or girl	date of disappearance:	age at date of disappearance	married or not	formal conversion procedure * or not
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Before the new Children's Law of January 1, 1996

57	girl	August 1993	14	no	no
58	girl	May 1994	17	no	yes
59	girl	February 1995	15	no	yes
60	girl	March 1995	15	no	no
61	girl	April 1995	16	yes	yes
62	girl	October 1995	16	no	yes
63	girl	no date known	16	no	no
64	boy	N: when?	17	no	yes
65	boy	N: when?	14	no	no
66	boy	N: when?	16	no	yes

After the new Children's Law of January 1, 1996

67	girl	January 1996	17	yes	not completed
68	girl	January 1996	15	no	yes
69	girl	January 1996	16	no	yes
70	girl	February 1996	17	no	yes
71	girl	March 1996	15	no	not known
72	girl	March 1996	14	no	no
73	girl	March 1996	16	no	yes
74	girl	May 1996	14	no	no
75	girl	May 1996	16	yes	yes
76	girl	March 1997	14	no	no
77	girl	March 1997	16	not yet	not completed

*) The formal conversion procedure includes the procedure at the Azhar and the Central Police Security Office (see chapter 3).

According to the Egyptian civil law, the clauses no. 135 and 136 of the official government communiqué number 5 of 1970 cite that no one is allowed to convert to Islam unless he or she is at least 16-years-old.

Several minors were taken out from under the custody of their Christian families and were placed under the custody of a Muslim family or in a Muslim institute without formal conversion because they were younger than 16. See examples 57, 60, 65, 72 (institute) and 74. (N: What law was officially applied?)

16. See examples 57, 60, 65, 72 (institute) and 74.
(N: What law was officially applied?)

Two minors formally converted to Islam while they were less than 16 years old which is in violation to Egyptian law. Violations are the examples 59 and 68. The girl in example 68 went to the Azhar with a new identity card with a wrong date of birth (birth certificate available).

The new family law of January 1, 1996 cites that girls (N: and boys?) up to 18-years old need permission from their guardian to get married. Before this date, the girl needed permission of her guardian until her 16th birthday. Violations are examples 67 and 75. Conversion was used to get the girls away from parental custody and thus avoid the application of the new family law.

Because of the lawful ages for conversion and marriage several stories report about falsifying the date of birth on a new birth certificate or new identity card. This is reported in examples 61, 68, 70 and 74.

63 (64) girl no date known 16 no
no

Example 57

Factors: minor, her return was promised but not carried out.

Maurice Sadek has the dossier of Manan, a 14 years old Christian girl. Her father said that she was kidnapped on 26\8\1993 by a Muslim lady whom he knows. He informed the police and accused the woman of kidnapping his daughter. Six days later, the police found the girl and called for her parents to take her. When the girl's mother went to the station, a police officer told her that " I can't give you your daughter because she refuses to go with you. You may speak with your daughter and try to convince her yourself. If she agrees to go with you, you can take her. "

The girl refused to go with her mother and the police refused to let the mother take her daughter, but according to the Egyptian law, this girl is a minor and she should have been given to her parents.

At the end the police officer told the girl's mother to go the next day to the prosecutor's office and there she can take her daughter. They went but did not find the girl because she had already been taken from the prosecutor's office by the Muslim lady who was accused of kidnapping her.

Example 58

Factors: minor and police not willing to help return the girl.

Maurice Sadek received a letter of a mother writing about her 17 year-old daughter Normale (N: date of birth? date of letter?) from Kossir in the Red Sea Governorate.

" My daughter Normale left the house on 29\5\1994 and has never come back. We searched for her and found out that she was deceived by someone who later kidnapped her in order to change her religion. She changed her name to Iman Ahmed.

I informed the police in Kossir, but they did not do anything to return my daughter to me. More than that, they hid my daughter from me and changed her name.

Hajj Ahmed Abdel Mafdi, the headmaster of El Kossir Preparatory School is the one who kidnapped my daughter. My daughter Normale is a student in the second grade of the Industrial Secondary School in Kossir. She is a minor and having no right to change her religion and her name on her own. Her father is dead. I am her guardian and she needs my legal consent for everything. I had to flee the area with my other daughter because of Muslim threats. Now we are living with my brother in Cairo.

Please, I beg you to help me and bring my minor daughter back to me.

She can't come back on her own because she is threatened that her mother and sister will be killed, if she tries to run away from them."

In the files are copies of telegraphs to President Hosni Mubarak and

the Minister of Interior, but none of them were answered.

Example 59

Factors: minor, insults of police, girls wanting to return, arrest of family members, pressure to sign document of non-interference.

Mr. Maurice Sadek presented the story of Saborra Zaky Khilla (15) and Amal Fawzy Menyass (19) two illiterate girls who left their home in a village near Dairut at 9 p.m. on 13/2/1995 to go to their literacy class. Both girls never returned home. Sadek's story is based on Mr. Shokralla Habieb's (Saborra's uncle) complaint to the Minister of Interior.

Sadek wrote in the newsletter of the Center for Human Rights and National Unity (N: which date? month and year.) that both girls were kidnapped on Monday, 13/2/1995, by a lady called Mrs. Faiza Said Abdel Hafez in Dairut. When the girls' relatives heard about the kidnap, some of them went to this woman's home. They didn't find her, but they found some of her neighbors who told them that she took the two girls to the police station. She spent time with the girls in the police station, teaching them how to answer questions they would be asked.

At the same time, Mr. Shokralla Habieb who is Saborra's uncle went to Dairut's mayor and told him about what had happened. The mayor phoned Mr. Ahmed Kadry, Chief of the Dairut Police Station and asked him to receive Mr. Shokralla. When Mr. Shokralla went to the police station, he received curses and insults from the chief of police who told him "the girls had converted to Islam." Mr. Shokralla asked to see the girls, but his request was refused.

Later, when the girls saw their fathers, they ran and hugged them and asked to go back home with their fathers. But the shift officer assailed the girls with insults and screamed at them: "Is this a children's game?" He forced the fathers out of the police station. When the fathers

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150-
"detained"
for "arrested"

tried to go to the prosecution, the police arrested Shokralla Habieb, Abd el-Messiah Habieb, Salah Habieb, Fouad Nakhla, Fawzy Metyas Makkar, Nageh Metyas Makkar and the girls' mothers. All of them were forced to sign a document promising not to interfere with the girls or with the lady who had kidnapped them. They remained ~~arrested~~ inside the police station until Thursday dawn 16\2\1995 when they were released. The same day, the police called the girls' mothers and their brothers : Fawzy Metyas Makkar, Malak Zaky Nakhla and Subhy Zaky Nakhla. They were tortured by the police officer who sent them later to the State Security of Kossia. They were released on Tuesday, 21\2\1995 evening. Until present none of the girls' relatives know where the girls are.

Example 60

Factors: family problems, minor, dispute about correct date of birth, police pressing family and priests to sign document of non-interference, alleged relationship with a Muslim friend and Christian family threatening with revenge.

Mr. Maurice Sadek provided the information for the following story about another young Egyptian girl named Hanan. Hanan is from a small town in Egypt's Nile Delta region. Her family claimed that she is 15 years old, but Hanan said she is 17 because her father delayed the registration of her birth for two years. Hanan said that she wanted to convert to Islam because of her family's bad treatment of her.

Hanan's father wrote a letter of complaint to the prosecuting attorney. The following is the full text of his letter:

" On the midnight of March 12, 1995 I was summoned to the station in B.. I was told that my minor daughter, Hanan, who is fourteen-years and three-months-old wishes to convert to Islam. She had her wish recorded in minutes numbered 1445\1995 in B. When I read her statement, I found out that she lives in the house of someone called Ahmed and that she wants to marry his son, Khaled. She told the police that she wants to convert to Islam because she has troubles with her family and she asked the police to protect her.

What happened with my daughter is against clause no. 227 which defines the lawful age of marriage. It is also against law no. 260 of 1960 which was modified by law no. 11 of 1965 concerning the lawful age for religious conversion.

Khaled used to seduce my daughter and hassle her on her way to and from the school. He succeeded in establishing an immoral relationship with her. My daughter used to exchange letters secretly with that person until one day her teacher found these letters on her. My daughter ran away from home because she was afraid that her teacher would tell us about the letters.

My daughter kept silent in all the meetings we had with her because she was threatened by Khalid's family. I wrote many complaints to the Attorney General and the Ministry of Interior after I had been insulted by the soldiers who were deployed in front of my house.

Please investigate ~~in~~ this incident involving the deception of my daughter.

Sadek has a copy of the police report which stated the following:

Hanan Y. R. came today to the police station in B. She said, "I was a Christian and I want to follow the formal procedures to declare my belief in Islam." We informed the Police Commissioner who ordered us to follow the formal procedures with her.

We asked Hanan the following questions:

Q: What is your name, How old are you and what is your occupation?

A: My name is Hanan Y. R, I'm 17 years old and student in the first level of el-Damira high school for girls.

Q: Why did you come today to the police station?

A: I came to convert to Islam. It has been my wish for a long time to convert to Islam because I love Islam and I believe in it.

Q: Did anybody force you to convert to Islam?

A: No, I did it of my own free will because I love Islam.

Q: Do you have a relationship with any Muslim who has forced you to convert?

A: No, I love Islam because I used to listen to the Qur'an at every Friday because there is a mosque close to my family house.

Q: Did you tell anyone in your family about your wish to convert to Islam?

A: I asked one of my friends to go and tell them today after we finished the schoolday. I came here right after school to ask for

protection from my brother Kamal because I'm afraid that he might hurt me.

Q: Are there any problems between you and anyone in your family?

A: I'm not feeling good about them because they don't treat their children equally. They discriminate between them. I loved Islam when I heard about how Muslim families treat their children.

Q: What is your intention in making this statement?

A: My intention is convert to Islam and ask for protection from my family.

Q: Do you have anything else you want to say?

A: No, I haven't.

This minute was closed at 8,30 P.M.. on March 12, 1995.

On the same day at 10.30 P.M. Hanan's priest came and asked to meet the girl. He met with Hanan in the presence of the vice-security chief and the commissioner of the police station in B. He spoke with her, but Hanan insisted on continuing with all the conversion procedures of conversion so the priest left the police station. An hour later another priest, Hanan's uncle, came and was allowed to see her. Hanan still insisted on continuing the procedures for conversion. A day later, Hanan's parents came with the first priest and another priest. They asked to sit alone with her. The priests and her parents were allowed to sit alone with Hanan, but she kept on insisting to convert to Islam and refused to return to Christianity. After this session, the police asked the parents to sign a document not to interfere with her. One of the two priests signed the document as well. The police also recorded that he asked them "to give the girl back to her parents because she is younger than 15-year old." He promised that she would receive good care.

"According to the Personal Affairs Law, the Ministry of Interior's instructions and the Azhar, this girl's conversion is invalid and she should be at her father's home," the priest said. The second priest refused to sign the document of non-interference out of principle. Then Hanan's two brothers were called in to sign a similar document which they did.

This was not a closed case. The father made a court case accusing the registry office of falsifying Hanan's birth certificate. He stated that "Hanan was born on 30/7/1980 which means that, today she is 14 years, 10 months and 5 days old. The Ministry of Interior refused to give my daughter a certificate declaring she is a

Muslim because she is younger than 16. The Ministry of Interior's refusal is evidence in my daughter's lawsuit."

Mr. Sadek informed the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) about the case. Mr. Galal Sa'da, a lawyer with the EOHR went on 23/5/1995 to the Delta town to investigate Hanan's conversion to Islam. Mr. Galal met with the head of the local police, a priest, Hanan's mother, Khaled's mother, Hanan and her brother.

Hanan's mother told Mr. Sa'da that her daughter was only 14. "She was encouraged by some teachers at her school to convert to Islam," she claimed. He then went to Khaled's family and he reported that Khaled's mother told him "We never had any relation with that girl before. She was offered to be taken in by some (Muslim) families and she chose ours."

According to Mr. Sa'da, Hanan told him:

"On March 12, 1995 I went to the police station and asked one of the soldiers, 'what is the religion of the officer in shift?' The soldier said, he is a Christian officer,' so I went away. A few hours later I came back to the police station and asked the soldier the same question. He told me the officer now on shift was a Muslim. I went to the officer and told him that I wanted to convert to Islam. The officer asked me to go back to my family because I was still young. He said that if I was promised anything by someone, those promises will not be fulfilled."

Hanan added:

"My real age is 17-years-old, my father delayed my registration by two years and that is why everyone thinks I'm young." While Khaled's mother went to make tea, Sa'ada had a chance to sit alone with Hanan. He told her "We are alone now, so you can tell me the truth and please don't be afraid of anything." Hanan replied "What I have already told you is the truth. I used to listen to the Koran and to the Friday sermon through the loudspeaker of a mosque close to my parent's house. I had thought about converting to Islam for a long time."

"None of my school teachers had anything to do with my conversion. I didn't go back to my village after the school day was finished on the 12th of March, but I took a microbus to B. in which I accidentally met some of my teachers. My teachers asked why I'm going to B. I told them that I'm going to visit a friend and a relative of mine."

"I got married to Khaled M. without a marriage contract because I don't have an identity card. But our marriage was witnessed by the people of the village. I met with Father H. eight times. My

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uncle who is also a priest came and met me and also another Father from M. visited. My family came and met with me too. I was afraid to sit alone with them and this is why I was asking for my sessions with them to be attended by someone else."

" I spent three days in the Central Police Security Office. I slept in one of the officer's nap rooms. Father H., a lawyer and another priest met with me in the Central Police Security Office. I'm very afraid of my family. Some of my friends told me that, my mother asked them to bring her a piece of my cloths or my hair. I'm afraid if I met with my family they would use black magic against me or violently attack me."

"A few days ago we found someone on the roof of the house next door. He ran away with two others as soon as the landlord saw him on the roof."

She concluded her remarks with the following assertion,
" I didn't know Khaled before my conversion to Islam as my family claims."

After his investigation, Mr. Galal Sa'da, arrived at the following conclusions concerning Hanan's case:

1) Hanan's family claimed that Khaled used to hassle Hanan on her way to

and from the school. This claim cannot be true because Hanan's family house

and the school are situated near the entrance of the town. Therefore, Hanan

never crossed the area where Khaled lives on her way to school.

2) One of Hanan's brothers reported, "If the legal methods don't work to

bring Hanan back, we will act according to our own ways to get her back."

3) Hanan's family complained that the police didn't tell her to go back to her family because she was a minor. They believe it is possible that Khaled went to Hanan's school to hassle her there!

Mr. Galal Sa'da believes that Hanan was neither forced nor deceived by anyone to convert to Islam. He also senses that Hanan's family is contemplating revenge if she does not return to Christianity.

From the information Mr. Sadek gave me and knowing the area, I think Mr. Sa'da is right but his conclusion is not complete. The basis of this incident seems to be a family conflict. The girl wants to leave her family at all cost, hears from the officer she met she is too young and fabricates the story that her father delayed the registration of her birth by two years. That story is very unlikely. Also Hanan's claim she got to know

about Islam through the loudspeakers is very unlikely. It is more likely she told others about the problems in her family and they offered to help her. The priests probably told her to return to her family and that they would ask her family to be kind to her. That is usually done in such a case a bishop told me. But because that was not what Hanan wanted, she only found an escape by becoming a Muslim and which made a Muslim family adopt her. Since conversion is legally not possible for a girl with her age, she will probably remain officially Christian until her 16th and then go through the formal conversion procedure. Her brothers might threaten with revenge but it is unlikely they'll carry it out because ~~it is known that~~ then the entire Muslim community would turn against them.

Example 61

Factors: initial misrepresentation of story, minor, conflicting police minutes, force used by police officer, falsified birth certificate used for marriage, courtcase, accused have been arrested, alleged protection given to family by Islamist group.

In May 1995, Maurice Sadek introduced me and a group of other journalists to Mr. Onsi Alfi Rafla (born 1937). His daughter Salwa was engaged on September 25, 1994 to Medhat (N: what is his full name) and planned to marry him in June 1995 (N: check date). On Friday April 28, 1995, Salwa went to church to take Holy Communion in the Giza section of Cairo. Mr. Onsi and his lawyer, Mr. Sadek, claimed that after she left the church a car picked her up and she disappeared. Mr. Onsi says he went to the police station who found her only one week after she disappeared. When he saw his daughter she cried and wanted to come back home with him.

On May 5, 1995, Lieutenant: Basem Mokadem of el-Haram police station in Cairo, reported that Mahmoud Abdallah Mohammed (born March 20, 1975) appeared before him and said he wanted to marry Salwa Onsi Alfi Rafla. Salwa, according to the police report, expressed her wish "to convert to Islam in order to be able to marry him." Mahmoud is a concrete carpenter. His identity card states that he lives in Matar Tares village, Senores, Fayoum but works in an aluminum factory in Nag Hamadi. He told the police he visits Fayoum once every six months and his sister in Cairo once every three months.

Mahmoud says he got to know Salwa in 1989 through his sister who was Salwa's neighbor. He said in the police report: "I got to know Salwa and I fell in love with her. I spoke with her about my feelings and she told me that she has the same feelings towards me as well. I also found out that she had a wish to convert to Islam although Salwa had become engaged to a Christian. I gave Salwa a two year period to think it over. I found

Salwa's feelings are real and serious and so were mine's because I love her. So that's why we went to the police station. Before this we went to the Azhar so that Salwa could convert to Islam, but they told us to come back tomorrow."

The police officer asked Mahmoud why he wanted to marry a Christian. He said: "I love her and because she wishes to become Muslim so that God will reward me."

After the interview with Mahmoud, Lieutenant Basem Mokadem interviewed Salwa Onsi. According to the police report, Salwa said she was born on August 1, 1978 (16-years-old at that time) and she did not have an identity-card which should have shown her date of birth. Salwa said in her statement: "Mahmoud's sister has a daughter called Hind. She has been my friend since childhood and I have spent most of my time with her at her house. Mahmoud, who is Hind's uncle visited them from time to time. I liked him and we fell in love with each other. But from the beginning, I believed in Islam and in Muslims because I lived all my life with Hind. My life with them convinced me more and more of Islam. I didn't have any relations with Christians. This is why I want to come to Islam because of my long relations with Muslims. Then I want to marry Mahmoud to prove that I really want to be a Muslim and also because I love him." Later we asked Salwa's aunt who, unlike her father, confessed that Salwa indeed befriended Hind and often went to study there for school exams. The family had not seen any friendship between Salwa and Mahmoud.

Lieutenant Basem Mokadem asked Salwa if she wanted to become Muslim in order to marry Mahmoud. In the police report Salwa said: "Of course not, the most important reason for me that I want to become Muslim is that I'm convinced of Islam's message and the Shehada or Islamic creed. If it will not be Mahmoud, it will be someone else, but with the condition that he should be Muslim." Salwa says she is the first one in her family to convert to Islam.

Lieutenant Basem Mokadem then asked about her engagement to a Christian. Salwa said. "Mahmoud proposed to me through an intermediary, but my father refused. After this I got engaged to a Christian man called Medhat Anwar."

"Did Mahmoud attack or rape you?" asked the police officer. "God forbid." Salwa answered and she confirmed that she wanted to get married to Mahmoud.

A few hours later Salwa wanted to add new statements to the report and was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed el-Wakiel in El-Omrana police station, Cairo. Salwa said she was 18 (note the difference with the first interview) and did not have an identity card. She said she changed her mind about converting to Islam and

about getting married to Mr. Mahmoud Abdalla Mohammed "because I love my family and can't live without them." Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed el-Wakiel asked if she was forced to give the first statement and Salwa answered "I gave my previous statements with my own free will." She wanted to change the report because she wanted to be with her family. The second statement was made after she had seen her father who had come to the police station and who had begged her to return to the family.

Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed el-Wakiel asked if she still wanted to marry Mahmoud and Salwa said 'Yes'. 'Do you still wish to convert to Islam?' the officer asked. 'No, I don't' Salwa answered according to the police report. Later, she made a statement about marrying Mahmud which is not so clear. She asked the police to have her father sign a document promising that he will treat her well and will not harm her. After this, the officer asked her father, Onsi, if he was willing to sign such a document. Onsi promised this and signed that he is going to receive his daughter back.

Then Mahmoud was called in and in response to the police officer, said he respected Salwa's decision of not converting to Islam and not getting married to him. Mahmoud tells the police "I didn't force her to do anything and she is free to decide what she wants. I promise that I will not interfere with her."

Later that day, in the evening, Salwa is again interviewed, this time at the governmental house of prosecution. The name of the officer who took the interview is unclear on the document. Salwa again said she was 18 and withdrew her statements made in the second interview (mahdar) compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed el-Wakiel. She said she was convinced of becoming a Muslim and that she had proclaimed her belief in Islam already. "I did this in my heart. I went this morning to the Azhar, but it was closed. I'm intending to go tomorrow again to proclaim my belief in Islam formally." She said in this report she was not forced by anyone to do this and according to the report asked the police to protect her. "I am asking the police to protect me and Mahmoud until I formally proclaim my belief in Islam and have an stable life." The officer then asked why she made the statement in which she had changed her mind about converting to Islam. Salwa, according to the report, replied. "I said that only because at that moment I felt pity for my father, but I still want to convert to Islam and I'm saying this with all my own free will."

Then Mr. Onsi was interviewed by the police who asked him what he thinks of Salwa becoming a Muslim. According to the report, he said, "Let her do whatever she likes." Onsi again promised that he would not interfere or harm Salwa or Mahmud.

Mr. Onsi said, however, that the reason why Salwa changed her statements in the third interview was because an officer named Osama el-Bahnasawy, a relative of Mahmud's, took her to an office for an hour. "During this hour, I was waiting in the police station, I was hearing her screaming. It was horrible, but I couldn't do anything. I wasn't allowed to go to her. I believe Salwa changed her statements under great pressure."

✱ After ^{leaving} ~~having~~ the police station, Mr. Onsi searched for a lawyer to help his daughter ~~back~~ and he found Maurice Sadek. Sadek says that her birth certificate states that she was born on August 1, 1978. He said "that means she was only 17 years old at that time. That is the age of a minor and she didn't have the right to say that she wanted to convert to Islam."

Sadek published the case in the newsletter of his Center for Human Rights and National Unity (N: date?). He wrote, "Salwa was kidnapped By Mrs. Gamalaat Mohammed Abdalalla, Mahmoud Mohammed Adel Alla el-Bahnasawy and others on 28\04\1990. Her father had the minutes no. 2812 On 28\4\1990 recorded. The girl told the police about her wish to go back to her father but the police were neutral about the matter and gave her back to those who had kidnapped her."

After the police and conversion procedures were over Salwa married Mahmud before the civil authorities on June 5, 1995 in Fayoum. On the official wedding certificate she uses her new Islamic name "Salwa Ahmed Abdel Salam Mohammed".

In Spring 1996, stories were told by Onsi's neighbors and others that Salwa had become pregnant and had a baby. But later, it was clear that those rumors were incorrect. Onsi asked people traveling to Senoris in Fayoum about the well-being of his daughter. "She is very miserable, living in extremely horrible conditions in a tiny room with a small bed." Onsi said on basis of the stories he heard, "She is treated as a 'wife' against her will. She always cries and asks to go back to her family."

Many family members started to give up the idea that they would ever see Salwa again. Her mother suspected at that time that she might have fallen in love with 'rapist' or that she was under his influence (magic). But Onsi, the father, did not want to give in. He went on looking for people who perhaps could help him.

✱ At the end of 1995, Onsi asked a legal counselor, known in the area of propagating national unity between Muslims and Christians, to take over the case. This man, who doesn't want to have his name mentioned, unlike Mr. Maurice Sadek, refused^{to} provide me, another foreign journalist and Egyptians with information during the

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procedure of the case. The legal counsellor said that this issue was entirely an internal matter for Egypt. Onsi, however, disagreed and wanted to keep contact with journalists, hoping this would increase the chances of getting his daughter back, and kept visiting us, providing us regularly with information.

The counselor thought Onsi would have a good chance to get his daughter back through a court case because the girl was minor and there had been obvious falsification of her birth certificate. He was also willing to do it 'pro deo' for the Onsi family. He was able to get hold of a copy of the marriage certificate which was made on basis of a false birth certificate. With that copy in hand the counsellor filed on March 12, 1996, his first official complaint at the policestation in Fayoum.

The counselor was able to win a courtcase (N:when?) in declaring Salwa's marriage as invalid because it was based on a falsified birth certificate. Mahmud's sister, the man who married them and others, 13 persons in total, were arrested. They, however, paid bail and became free. Mahmud was, at that time, in the army. Later they found him and he was notified to appear in court.

Police officer Usama el-Bahnasawi was questioned by his superiors what happened when he questioned Salwa in a room alone and her father heard her screaming. It is not known whether a report exists of this internal police investigation. In spring 1996, the police asked Usama el-Bahnasawi to stop his work. It is not sure why this was done. It is said that he had a bad reputation. Perhaps the instructions to stop work were because of Salwa, perhaps because of other cases or for other reasons. It is not known what has happened to Usama el-Bahnasawi since then.

Onsi did not dare to go to the village where his daughter was living. In July 1996, he found some people who were willing to go to the village in Fayoum where she was staying. They came back with the story that the village is controlled by the extremist Gama'at al-Islamiya group and that people who enter the village or leave it are checked by radicals, not through checkpoints but by following people in the village who do not belong there and intimidating them. Mahmud went to the village in the hope of getting their protection.

6 The prosecutor-general of Fayoum met in June 1996 with Salwa. He told the counselor that she was not ~~to be~~ willing to return to her family. But Onsi did not believe this. He believed that she was put under pressure and received threats from Mahmud's family, to say this. That meeting, however, also proved that the rumors about Salwa having a baby were false.

Amal, Salwa's sister married on August 31, 1996. Salwa was not there. Father was very happy this daughter got married because he was far too worried something like what happened to Salwa might happen to her.

After several hearings and postponements, Salwa was asked to appear in court in December 1996 (N: which date exactly?) and when she failed to appear, she again in January 1997 (N: which date exactly?). Again she did not come. But at the next courtcase, Sunday February 16, 1997, she was there. Onsi, finally after almost two years saw his daughter again. It was very emotional for him. Court authorities did not allow him to speak with her. According to Onsi, the judge asked her if she wanted to return to her family or not and she first answered 'Yes'. When the question was repeated she answered 'No'. Then again 'Yes' and then again 'No'. According to Onsi she was laughing hysterically and he believed she had been drugged. But others say she was laughing at him. The judge decided to have another session on March 31.

The judge wants to hear witnesses stating what they have observed of Mahmud's sister before Salwa disappeared. Onsi says he has witnesses stating that this lady has a bad reputation. She, for example, would promise to pay for goods in installments and would not pay. This case is still on-going.

Example 62

Factors: minor and mentally handicapped.

Among Mr. Maurice Sadek's files is a letter from Mr. Alfons in Beni Suef to a priest dated 1\10\1995. Alfons wrote of the kidnapping of his 16 year-old mentally handicapped sister who has an IQ of minus 20. When Mr. Alfons informed the police station about his sister's kidnapping and conversion to Islam, the police commissioner told him that she was not kidnapped but she converted to Islam by her own choice. Sadek responded, "How can 16 year-old mentally handicapped girl with such a low IQ convert by her own free will?"

Example 63

Factors: minor, family problems, accusation of kidnap and a miracle.

The Lost Sheep pages 83 to 84 speaks of a pretty 16 year-old girl who disappeared from her little village. Maria's family looked every where for her, but they couldn't find her. They heard that she left the village with a Muslim who brought Maria to some other people and then he returned without her.

Maria's father, grandfather, uncle and mother went with the village priest to the police station accusing certain people of kidnapping her. Immediately the police started moving, looking for the girl. Later that night, the police managed to bring Maria and the young men who were accused of kidnapping her. She seemed unable to concentrate and was afraid for her family. One of the police officers was afraid that she would be murdered, so he locked her in a room, kept the key with himself and decided to bring her the food by himself.

Next morning, Maria went to the prosecution and was interrogated from 9.00 am. until 3.00 p.m. The prosecution accused the father of torturing his daughter. The girl was transferred to a medical examiner and the father had to sign on a document promising not to interfere with her. He also was arrested for four days until the interrogations were finished.

Maria wondered whether she was acting unfairly to her family. The village prepared for her wedding procession and bought her a trousseau, gifts and things for the house.

The following night, while she was alone sleeping on a chair in the officer's room, she felt a great light shining around her. She jumped out of the chair in fear. She saw no one but she heard a voice telling her : " Maria, I'm the Archangle Michael. I can open all the doors for you, but you don't know the way back to

your home. Tomorrow the priest will come and take you with him. "

After the girl had heard this, her mind was restored and eagerly awaited for the priest to come and take her. It was an indescribable moment when she met with her father with hugs and tears.

Example 64

Factors: minor, torture of police, going along villages with a convert to collect money and police encouraging conversion.

Maurice Sadek has a dossier of Atef (born 8\1\1978) from Giza.
His father send a letter of complaint to the Minister of Interior.

"Major Alla Fathy arrested, assaulted, beat and insulted me. He tried to scrape the cross tattoo off my wrist by using a nail.
He took my family identity card and refused to give it back to me. He did this because I refused to agree on my 17 year-old son's conversion to Islam.

My son was taken (N: date?) by Sheikh Reda Koraniy who lives in our village.
I saw Sheikh Reda walking with my son and begging money from the next villages claiming that my son converted to Islam and is in need of money. Until now he has collected 15,000 EgP.

Mr. Minister, I have been suffering so much and my son does not know what is he doing because he still very young, besides this, they have threatened him that they will kidnap his younger sister if he ever thought of returning to his family.

Major Alla Fathy is protecting Sheikh Reda Koraniy and has threatened me and my family not to contact my son. He has also insulted me because I am a Christian. The main aim of the major Alla's torturing to me is to encourage the Christian youth to forsake Christianity and to convert to Islam without being

afraid of their families. In the beginning, Christian boys are being tempted by material things to convert to Islam, and later, they are threatened with the fear of being killed if they forsake Islam."

Atef's father got two medical reports from the Nadeem Center for the Psychological Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence.

Those medical reports state :
Mr. Abdel T. has been tortured. He has a 2 cm. long wound in his right wrist caused by using a sharp tool.
This torture has caused him:

- Extreme depression.
- Weakness in his senses.
- Feeling pain in his right arm and fingers except for his thumb.
- Damage to the nerves of his right thumb.

Maurice Sadek claimed, "After the medical reports, the Central Police Security Office in Giza investigated the matter; but did not help him to get back his son. This is because the boy was encouraged by the local authority to proclaim his belief in Islam. They assured him that if he would convert to Islam, he would be free from all family restrictions."

Example 65

Factors: several minors converted in own town, according to the complainant Islamic groups are involved using force, no protection of the police.

Maurice Sadek has a letter of Mr. Ghibrial to a priest asking for help. (N: date of letter)

"We are sending you this letter and pray to God that you can do anything to help us. We are living in the city of el-Wasta in Beni Suef. What is happening to us here ~~is something had~~ ^{happened} never happened before in any other place in Egypt.

Since 1\1\1995 until now, Islamic groups kidnapped four persons by force and made them convert to Islam. The last one they kidnapped was a young boy from Komn el-Aros on March, 1995. This boy called Awad, is 14 years old and is a student in the second grade of the preparatory school. The boy admitted that he converted to Islam. This, however is illegal because the law states that no one is allowed to covert to Islam unless he / she is at least 16 years old. Clause no. 36 states that the freedom of belief is for everyone and there should be non-interference in any one's religion. The conversion of this boy to Islam is illegal because the boy is still very young and has no ability to understand the differences in beliefs.

The boys who converted to Islam are living now in the house of a lawyer called Saad el-Dien el-Kady, in Komn el-Aros in El-Wasta. This lawyer opened a court case asking to change the boys' names.

Please help us, we don't know what to do in this painful disaster or how to solve such terrible problems. There are girls that were kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam and the government is doing nothing.

Please will you publish it in " Watany " newspaper because the government is doing nothing, but forces the boys and girls' parents to sign documents promising that they will not interfere with their children who ~~had~~ converted to Islam. What this lawyer Saad el-Dien el-Kady is doing^{is} illegal because the law states that no one is allowed to convert to Islam unless he / she is at least 16 years old. Please help us. "

Factors: poverty and lack of medical help.

This Christian family consists of parents, a daughter and two sons. The father is a diabetic and has one of his legs amputated. He is no longer able to work. His daughter of 18 is mentally handicapped, uneducated, and unable to work. The mother had to use a part of their house as a small shop selling sweets in order to help support her family after all their money has spent on treatment trying to avoid the amputation of the father's leg. Eventually they lost all their money and father's leg had to be amputated. After one of the two sons became 16, he left his house and converted to Islam. He sought to escape all the difficulties his family experienced.

Example 67

Factors: minor, deception, procedure, religious counseling session, procedure not completed, divorce in courtcase.

I spoke with a beautiful young girl (born 6/11/1978) who almost completed the conversion procedure to Islam and her fiancée, but at the last moment she decided not to go through with it. Part of her story was published by Maurice Sadek which made her upset. She was willing to tell her story but did not want her name to be mentioned. She is referred to as "A".

"One day while I was entering my secondary school" A said, "I saw a group of teachers standing together, I greeted all of them. Ashraf, one of those teachers called me and said that he wanted to speak in private with me. I followed him and we had this following short conversation "

Ashraf : Why don't you look into my eyes ?
 A : Why do I have look into your eyes ?
 Ashraf : Just look and you will see.

"As soon as I lifted my eyes up and looked into his eyes, A added, " I couldn't control myself and I felt as if all my will became his ".
 "We believe that this teacher used a kind of magic in order to take A's will away and control her ", A's fiancé said.

"He ordered me to follow him, " A continued, " I wanted to say no but I couldn't. He took me to the Azhar to say the Islamic creed and a friend of his came with us. In the Azhar they asked me some questions such as whether Jesus is a God or a prophet but I couldn't answer any of their questions. " Ashraf said to the sheikh that, " She is too tired and can not answer any of your questions, please let her say the Islamic creed. " "The sheikh asked me if I really wanted to become a Muslim. At this moment, I really wanted to say no but I could not and said, " Yes, I want to become Muslim. " I said the Islamic creed. (A's certificate of conversion was issued on 15\1\1996)

"After we left the Azhar, Ashraf's friend took me to his home. When I started to come out from under the magic control, Ashraf's friend phoned Ashraf and said to him, ' Come quickly because she is awakening. ' Ashraf came very quickly and he just looked at me and I couldn't control myself again."

"On Friday 19\1\1996, we got married in Shubra police station. I lived with Ashraf in his home with his mother and sister and they were so good to me that I could even phone my mother in their presence. Ashraf was always asking me to pray with him as a Muslim woman. But I acted as if I was praying the Muslims prayer, while in fact I prayed the Lord's prayer and this was something that disturbed him very much. "

"Ashraf's uncle told me once that he did not like that I was forced to marry Ashraf and forced to become a Muslim. He also asked me if there is anything he could do for me. I told him that, I wanted to meet my parents. He gave me permission to phone my parents and arrange a meeting between them and Ashraf's family in his house. "

"When my parents came to meet me and Ashraf's family they were very wise and did not make any trouble. On the contrary, they

pretended that everything was fine except my mother looked Ashraf up and down. They brought me all my clothes and said to Ashraf, " Now as you are our son-in-law, you have to bring A and spend some days with us. Ashraf promised them he would do so. "

"After my parents left, Ashraf asked me, ' Why was your mother looking me up and down all the time? ' "

" I answered him saying Because you look like a monkey. Ashraf became very angry and he was about to hit me but he didn't."

" The night before I went to the Central Police Security Office to complete the procedure of my conversion, I phoned my father and he asked me if I really wanted to continue these procedures in order to legally become Muslim. I told him that I did not. My father told me not to worry and asked me to bring my identity card with me and hide it somewhere. "

"The next day in the Central Police Security Office I had to meet with Hajj Imam and Father Hazqial. Hajj is an honorary title for someone who has been on pilgrimage to Mecca. Father Hazqial asked me 'Do you really wish to become Muslim?' and he saw that I hesitated. I asked if he could give me protection. When he said, 'yes', I answered that I didn't want to become Muslim and Father Hazqial said 'Don't worry my daughter; you can take off your veil right now.' I took off my veil and Hajj Imam became angry and said, ' If someone asks you to take off a piece of your clothes, you take it off this easily? ' I told him, 'Yes, if he is someone like Father Hazqial I have to obey him because he is like a father to me.' Then Father Hazqial asked me to cover my hair in order not to offend Hajj Imam which I did. The procedures of my conversion to Islam stopped at that moment in spite of Hajj Imam's anger and Ashraf's rage who had to divorce me. "

" According to Islamic law; if a Muslim man wants to divorce his wife he has to proclaim these words three times : ' I divorce you. ' But Ashraf proclaimed these words only

once, so he has the right to ask me to go back to him as his wife. There is a court case that will be held in November to decide whether I have to go back to him as his wife or not. I'm sure, however that I will win this case". (N: check with Maurice Sadek what kind of marriage this was, orfi or civil and what happened in this court case)

Sadek said, "A high rank officer in the Central Police Security Office brought the girl back to her family. As soon as the girl saw her family she ran towards her father, hugged him and was determined to remain with him."

note: A fell apparently for Ashraf's eyes. Another girl had said that Ashraf is a very handsome man who has deceived 14 girls, including A. " He promised every girl that he would marry her if she converted to Islam. The girls believed him and converted to Islam because they wished to marry such a handsome man. He broke his promise with every girl after she converted. None of these girls managed to return to Christianity except for A. There are rumors saying that this teacher receives lots of money for every girl he brings to Islam but I don't whether or not this is true.

Example 68

Factors: minor, sisters, document of non-interference, procedural mistakes made by police, falsification of identity card

Maurice Sadek wrote in a publication of the Center for Human Rights and National Unity (N: which issue? Month and year) that "Mervat, a 15 year-old secondary school student, was kidnapped on the first of Ramadan 1996 (January 20) by Mohammed Kamal Habieb (30), a lawyer. The man had also kidnapped her sister Mariam (21 years old and a student in the commercial institute) on 8\11\1995." In the documents I found that Mervat's sister Marian, who converted earlier to Islam, married Mohammed Kamal Habieb.

On 27\1\1996, Mervat's mother (39) went to the police station to notify them of her daughter's disappearance. According to the police minutes, the police officer asked the mother : "Is there any trouble between you and anyone?" She answered " No ". These minutes are nothing else but formally notifying the police about Mervat's disappearance without accusing anyone.

Mervat went on 5\2\1996 with Mohammed Kamal to the police and was interviewed by Lieutenant Zakaria Seliman. Mohammed said that Mervat has been staying in his house since 20\1\1996. The officer asked Mervat why she went there. Mervat answered "I went to Mohammed Kamal to visit my sister and there I had the idea of converting to Islam". The officer asked, "Have you already converted to Islam? " Mervat answered "Yes, I proclaimed my belief in Islam on 31\1\1996 in the Religious Ruling Council of the Azhar and I changed my name to Hager Mohammed Ahmed Abdel Wahed. There is no indication that the girl met with any priest.

Sadek said "Mervat's father was called to the police station and met with Lieutenant Zakaria Seliman, Chief Inspector of Shubra el-Kheima who made him sign a document promising not to interfere with his daughters." But the police minutes in Sadek's files report nothing to indicate that Mervat asked for protection or that her father signed any document promising not to interfere with his daughter.

The father found out that Mervat got a new identity card, claiming she was 16 years old, stating an incorrect date of birth. According to the card, she was born on 28\7\1979. But her birth certificate says that she was born on 28\7\1980. The falsification is obvious. A new birth certificate was issued on 28/2/1996 with 1979 as the year of birth. The false identity card was issued on January 31, 1996 giving 1980 as the year of birth. The father informed the General Prosecution who decided to release the girl

and demanded a police investigation into the incident.
This
girl a minor, should have returned to her father but
this did not happen.

(N: I added in the old kidnap-file questions which were
never
answered. To which church does she belong, etc. 2nd.
Sunni Khaled
did an interview with the family. Do you have this tape?
I
remember something from him that the conversion of
Mariam was
out of love but that Mervat's was indeed forced. Is this
correct?)

Example 69

Factors: minor, police tells family to forget about her.

Youssef Sedhom wrote in the opening article of the
Egyptian
weekly, "Watany," of 10\3\1996, that "a terrible crime
had occurred
in Minya." He described what happened. "On the 6th of
January, on (Coptic Orthodox - CH) Christmas eve,
Makram Lahzy
Yo'anas, a father in agony, sent a letter to us pleading
" please
help me! My daughter Sanaa, 16 years old, was violently
kidnapped
in the streets of Minya. The minutes were recorded
under no.
408\1996. We were informed by an officer in Minya that
the girl
is in Samalot police station. We rushed there and the
police
officer who met us said, " Your daughter proclaimed her
belief in
Islam and whoever comes against her from your family,
will be arrested and
accuse him of possessing weapons and sent him to
prison.
When we objected saying that the girl is still a minor
and she
is not allowed to make such a decision, the officer
ordered his
policemen to beat us and then they sent us out of the
police
station. We hurried to the assistant manager of security
in
Minya who gave us his personal card and told us to go
and meet
with the Commissioner of Samalot police station. When we
went

there the commissioner told us that the girl had been taken by an officer. The father was told by one of the leaders in Central Police Security Office to forget about the girl."

Example 70

Factors: minor, falsification of birth certificate, document of non-interference.

Nada Noshy Basiely wrote a letter (N:date?) to Mr. Amir Salem, lawyer and the director of the Legal Research and Resource Center for Human Rights about the 'kidnap' of his daughter Nada Noshy Basiely (born in Shubra el-Kheima on 7\9\1978) by Mohammed S. F. A. Mr. Salem summarizes the complaint in a letter to Mr. Maurice Sadek and asked for his help. "The kidnapper took her to Sohag and there her birth certificate was falsified, now stating that she was born and lives in Sohag. She proclaimed her belief in Islam in the Sohag registration office on 23\1\1996. The girl's birth certificate, however, proves that she was born in Shubra el-Kheima, el-Qalyubia. The kidnapper returned with the girl to Shubra el-Kheima after he had falsified her data. Nada Noshy is a student in a secondary commercial school for girls. The kidnapper had the minutes no. 3203 recorded in Shubra el-Kheima police station on 18\2\1996. The girl's father had to sign a document promising not to interfere with his daughter. The minutes in Central Police Security Office of Sohag prove that the girl had neither seen a priest nor her family.

We hope that you will cooperate with us to get the kidnapped girl returned. She is a minor and who, according to a witness, was threatened to be killed, if she decided to return to Christianity."

(N: Amir Salem wrote this letter to Maurice Sadek?)

Example 71

Factors: minor, police pressure and document of non-interference.

Maurice Sadek introduced me to the parents of Samia, born on 8\1\1981. Samia was a student in a commercial high school in Dairut, located 280 km. south of Cairo. She was said to have been "kidnapped" on March 9, 1996. Her family accused Sheikh Haz, an employee of Dairut's tax office, of forcing her to convert to Islam and wearing the Islamic veil (negab). They also claimed that Sheikh Haz forced many Christian female minors to convert to Islam.

The mother, during the interview, was completely in tears. After asking her several times, she mentioned that she saw Samia on several occasions with a Muslim boy who introduced her to Sheikh Haz.

According to Samia's father: "On 10\3\1996 we heard that Sheikh Haz took Samia and gave her a veil to wear and went with her to the police station in Dairut. We went to the police station in order to see her but we were prevented from doing so by the police officers. Mr. Mustafa Mohammed, who is a member in the parliament helped us later to see Samia with a priest. We had to wait for a very long time before she was brought to us and she wore the Islamic veil.

The priest asked her 'Do you know anything about the Qur'an?' And Samia replied: 'No, I don't.' The priest then asked: 'Do you know anything about the Bible?' She said 'Yes, I do.' At this moment, the police officer shouted at us and ordered policemen to take the girl away. A few hours later we received an order to be present the next morning at the police station. Upon arrival the next morning we were put in a prison cell until the rest of the family arrived. The police officer made us sign a document promising not to interfere with Samia.

On 4\5\1996, my daughter met her cousin during the school exam and told her to "please tell my parents and my brothers that I want to see them but I can't because Sheikh Haz forbids me." On 6\5\1996, my wife went to the school to see her because Samia had asked for this, but she was told that she could not see Samia because Sheikh Haz was then at the school. Later Sheikh Haz allowed Samia's mother to see her and speak with her in his home and in his presence."

On 12\3\1996 Samia's father sent letters to President Hosni Mubarak, the Minister of Interior and the Central Police Security Office. Until now he received no answer.

Example 72

Factors: minor, deception, alleged kidnap, police helping people girl went to, accusation gang is involved to kidnap minors, police accused of assisting this gang, police commissioner calling Christians atheists, police refusing to carry out instructions from higher authorities, fear of sectarian violence.

Mr. Maurice Sadek showed me the file of Isis Rezq Nawar (born 1\11\1981; a copy of the birth certificate is in the file) in the village of Saft el-Sharkia, el-Wasta, Beni Suef. Her father, Rezq Nawar Rezq, wrote a letter to the Minister of Interior asking for help." I have a minor daughter who is 14 years old and called Isis Rezq. Samir, my eldest son, befriended a young man called Mohammed Helmy who lives in el- Diabia, el-Wasta and works on a poultry farm in my village. This young man used to spend long hours with my son Samir in my house where I live with my wife and my other children Kamal, Sameh, and my precious daughter, Isis. I always trusted that young man and thought he would respect his coming to my home and that he would be faithful in his friendship with my son. What happened was different than what I thought. Mohammed Helmy took advantage of his friendship with my son and his frequent visits to my house and my warm welcome to him. I had never doubted his faithfulness. I love all people. He deceived my daughter Isis Rezq and took advantage of her thoughtless whims, her wild feelings, her young age and her teenage feelings. He spoke words of love to my daughter and she liked him. I was not aware of his betrayal of me and of his friendship with my son Samir.

On March 17, 1996, I traveled with my wife from my village to Cairo for her medical treatment. This young man took advantage of

✂ my absence ~~and my~~ at seven o'clock in the evening of that day and arranged with Kamal Ahmed Isah from my town of Saft el-Sharkia, Mohammed Korani el-Haddad and his wife, Mohammed Hardof and his wife, his son Hassan Mohammed, and Sabet Mohammed to kidnap my daughter from my house. All these people are from Saft and they are all neighbors of mine.

The kidnap of my daughter took place in the following way:
 Mohammed Hardof's wife sent her grandson to lure my daughter to their house. My youngest son, Sameh Rezq, who has polio went with his sister to Mr. Mohammed Hardof's house. When those who arranged to kidnap my daughter saw my son Sameh accompanying his sister, they asked him to buy a pack of cigarettes. At that time there was a car parked next to Mr. Mohammed Hardof's house. When my daughter asked them why they had asked her to come. Mr. Hardof's wife answered her by saying, " I want you to drink some tea with me ".

When my son returned after buying the cigarette pack, he neither found the car nor those who had arranged this conspiracy. He went to his elder brother, Samir, to ask him about his sister's whereabouts. My sons did not know where their sister went. Samir went to Mr. Hardof's wife and asked her if she knew where his sister was. Mrs. Hardof told him that she had no idea. My two sons looked for their sister all over the town but they could not find her.

Later, some people told them that their sister was in the police station with Mohammed Helmy. They claimed that my daughter wanted to get married to that young man and change her religion. Mr. Kamal Ahmed Isah who is an Arabic language teacher in Wasta secondary school then adopted my daughter, but later changed his

mind.

The most important thing is that the Wasta police station was supposed to protect my daughter from this criminal act of kidnap, protect her from people who want to fan the flame of sectarian violence and cause dissention between people of different religions. Instead of protecting my daughter, the Wasta police station helped those people to carry out their conspiracy. Although my daughter was in the police station when we went in to inquire about her, the police commissioner, the chief of the investigation department and all the police officers denied that she was there and prevented us from entering. It was also very sad that the police guarded my daughter during her wedding procession in Wasta's on March 18, 1996. It was claimed that Mohammed Helmy's uncle adopted my daughter in return for a check of 35,000 Egp or US \$ 10,325 from the chief of the investigation department. Later, he became afraid that there would be trouble, so he gave the girl back to the police station after she had lived for some time in his house in the area of Diabia.

I went again to the police station to take my daughter back home, but they denied that she was there. Another person from the area of Maidum, Wasta adopted my daughter. We asked the Bishopric of Giza to help us and they phoned the state security police. In response to this phone call, the Wasta police station called for Father Youssef Awad, the priest of Mar Girgis church in Saft el-Sharkia. Father Youssef went to the police station and asked to see the girl, but the officers denied that the girl was there and said to him, "We will look for the girl and when we find her we will bring her to you " .

On March 21, the Wasta police station called Father Youssef to

meet my daughter after they had brought her from Maidum. When my daughter saw Father Youssef, she cried and said to him, "I want to go back home with you." When the chief of the investigation department heard what my daughter said, he told Father Youssef to "Wait for an hour until we finish the procedures and then you can take the girl with you." They detained the girl for an hour and threatened her that she would be harmed if she would leave with the priest. Later they brought her again before the priest and asked her once again whether she like to go with him or not. The girl said, "No." This was because she had been threatened by the chief of the investigation department, the police commissioner and the second man in charge. Father Youssef left the police station feeling very angry from this behavior believing it would surely lead to sectarian violence.

Mr. Kamal Ahmed Isah, the organizer of this crime, gave private lessons to one of the police commissioner's sons. It means that the police station is guarding those people who kidnapped my daughter.

While Father Youssef was in the police station on March 21, he asked the vice police commissioner where the girl had been since March 17. The vice commissioner said that he did not know anything about the girl, although she had been several times in the police station since that date and especially on March 17 when she was kidnapped. The police, however, had not even written any formal document about that.

On March 21, about 200 people from Saft, el-Diabia and Maidum gathered in front of the police station. In spite of ordering the crowd to disperse, the police let them stay in order to fear and threaten us.

Father Youssef had asked the chief inspector to allow him to take the girl with him. The chief inspector phoned the Head of the Security in Beni Suef who transferred my daughter to the Central Police Security Office (Muderiyet el-Amn). Later my daughter had to go to the state security police (Mabahees Amn el-Dawla) which manipulated us. Once they said they would give us the girl back and then they mocked all of us. We had been terrified from every security officer we met in Beni Suef because they considered anyone who would defend my daughter their enemy. We are still terrified the security officers because we had been threatened.

After that the state security police did something so horrible and provocative which, without God's help, it would have turned the whole situation into a massacre. The state security police, the general investigation department of the Central Police Security Office and those who are responsible for this matter in this office arrested the girl's uncle Mr. Abad Nawar Rezq, the young man Mr. Mohammed Helmy and my daughter Isis. They put the three of them in one cell to spend the whole night together until the next morning. Was this something wise and reasonable to put them together in one cell ? The young man did something so provocative in order to mock at her uncle. He hugged the girl and performed sexual foreplay acts in front of her uncle. If my brother had not acted as wisely and as reasonably as he did, there would have been a massacre in the cell. I don't know what they wanted to achieve by putting the two parties together in one cell. Did they want the two parties to kill each other ? How could such a decision come from those who are responsible for security?

The situation developed and my daughter had to stand before the Attorney General who decided to put her in a social care house for minors until the investigations were completed. The Attorney General again decided to have my daughter remain in a social care house inspite of all my efforts to have her back under my guardianship.

Mr. Minister, we are calling you for help and beg your merciful heart and your wise mind to give me back my daughter whom I love so much. Mr. Minister, I am seeking refuge in you because I know that you have been a good helper to the weak, such as myself. I have no power and no might except for the might of God and your help. Mr. Minister, I want Your Excellency to know that whenever we went to any of those were who are responsible for security either in the Wasta police station or in the city of Beni Suef, we were very badly humiliated. They mocked us.

We sent a fax to the General Intelligence explaining the whole story, but they have not done anything to punish those who are planning for sectarian violence. More importantly, is that whenever we asked for documents such as the investigations' minutes either from the Central Police Security Office or from the police station or anywhere else, we encountered nothing but extreme refusal. We don't know why they refused to give us the documents. This we experienced in addition to the humiliation we found from every person who is responsible for security either in Central Police Security Office or in the Wasta police station.

Mr. Minister, will there be a time that I will never be able to see my young daughter again ? Will my house stay in a state of despair and sadness because my daughter is far from the bosom of her family and from my heart?

I am broken-hearted over my missing daughter and for my miserable life since she has been taken away from me. I am in agony. I beg your kind heart which is known for its desire for righteousness and for every citizen's smile. I beg you, and I beg your conscience and your merciful heart to help have my minor daughter back to me and my family's bosom that the happiness of me and my family may be complete." The letter was never answered.

Isis' father was not alone in complaining about his daughters disappearance. Father Yousef wrote a letter (N: to whom?) to denouncing "a group or gang working on deceiving, creating fear and kidnapping minor girls." The priest accused six police officers, mentioned by name. He also included the people mentioned in Isis' father's letter to the Minister of Interior, as participating in her disappearance. He also spoke of the above mentioned teacher Kamal Ahmed Isah, his brother, two local sheikhs, an employee in the registration office of Wasta, a grocer and several other people.

"All these people have a plan to help the police commissioner and his assistants." the priest wrote. "On January 18, 1995, they kidnapped Mariam Nagieb Botros who was living in Maidum. One week later they kidnapped a young man from Kamn el-Aros. One week later they kidnapped a 14-year-old boy from Kafr Abigig who now lives with his teacher who adopted him. On March 9, 1995, they kidnapped Sabah Fawzy Fargalla and a young man from Wasta, but he managed to escape from them. It means that they kidnapped five people within 45 days."

The priest continued his letter. "On March 17, 1996, we were very surprised when we heard that Isis Reza Nawar, who is 14-years and 4-months-old, went to the police station. Nobody from the police

station informed us that Isis was there. When her family heard that she was in the police station, they went to meet her, but the officers refused to let them meet her saying that she was not in the station. The priest went several times to the police station, but was told that she was not there. On Thursday March 21, 1996, the police station called the priest to come. When he arrived, he did not find Isis, but spent about two hours with the commissioner. The commissioner told him that it was very difficult for the girl to go back home, because if she did, she would be an apostate and for that she would be killed. He also said that a Muslim man would never marry and have sexual intercourse with an atheist."

The letter continues "On the next day, Friday March 22, 1996, Father Youssef Awadalla went to the police station at 2 p.m., but he too did not find Isis there. Father Youssef asked the vice commissioner, Mr. Mohammed Qodb, to be able take the girl back because she was still a minor. The vice commissioner promised Father Youssef that he would give him the girl back. There were also two police majors there at the time, Major Tarek Bahr and another called Refa'at. That evening, Father Youssef went again to the police station and met with Isis who refused to answer any of his questions. Minute no. 1178\96, in Wasta was recorded this incident. Father Youssef found out that Isis was living in the home of Mr. Mohammed Ragab Abdel Haliem in Maidum.

On Saturday, March 23, 1996, Father Youssef and Father Morkos, the pastor of went to the state security police in Beni Suef. They met with Isis in the presence of the Lieutenant Colonels Mostafa Hafez and Ibrahiem el-Masry who were very harsh with the priests. During this time the girl changed her mind

about converting to Islam. She cried and said that she regretted what she had done and wanted to return with the priests. She asked Father Morkos if she could live at his house. Mr. Mostafa Hafez was asked three times to write down Isis had said about her wish to go back with the priests in a formal minute, but he did not do this.

Mr. Mostafa Hafez, instead, terrified Isis. He had her sit with the young man who had kidnapped her and with whom she had run away. Isis changed her mind once again particularly after being threatened by some secret informers and by someone called Ied who worked with the state security police.

After our statements had been taken in Central Police Security Office, the case was transferred to the Attorney General in Beni Suef. He decided on March 24, 1996, to send the girl to a social care house. The girl was sent to an Islamic social care house in Beni Suef and since then they have been teaching her everything about Islam. When her parents went to see her, she refused to go back with them.

Everything happened by threat, creating fear and brain-washing. The case was postponed from one session to another; from the Attorney General to the prosecution and from the prosecution to the social care house and so on. This will continue until her parents despair and she has been exposed to more brain-washing.

Now we are afraid for our sons and daughters, because everyday we receive threats of kidnapping them either from the street or from their schools to convert them to Islam.

In spite of the so many promises we have heard from the state security, the Central Police Security Office, the archbishopric of

Giza and the lawyers of getting Isis back, all those responsible in Beni Suef refused to carry out any of the instructions coming from higher authority.

Example 73

Factors: minor, land conflict with neighbors, likelihood of pressure used by police.

According to the records of Mr. Sadek, Adly Bolos, a 52-year-old employee of the fire department in Beni Suef in Upper Egypt, went on March 27, 1995 to the police to inform them about his daughter Shadyia's disappearance. Shadyia was born on 15/12/1978. He accused Fahmy (45), owner of a Shell petrol station, farmers Hasham (28), and Abdel Mageed (59), and a guard Abdel Aziz of kidnapping Shadyia.

The father's statements to the police contradicted letters he wrote to the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Justice, the Attorney General and the Chairman of the Parliament. He told the police, that he had no problems with the above named family. But in the letters he accused these men, " of kidnapping my daughter in order to humiliate me and my family by forcing my daughter to change her religion".

Shadyia had left her father's home on March 26, 1995, after Abdel Mageed's daughter visited her and they went out together as friends. A day later, Shadyia said the Islamic creed in the Religious Ruling Council of the Azhar in Cairo, and she adopted a new name, Essmaa Mohammed el-Mahady.

The same day, she went to the police station and told them that she had proclaimed her belief in Islam and said, " Here is my certificate of proclamation." She then demanded protection from her family saying that she loves Islam, and was convinced

that it is the truth because of hearing sermons from the mosque.

Later she went to live in Abdel Mageed's house.

On 31\3\1995, the girl, now Essmaa, went to the police station and asked her father, brother, a 19 year-old farmer, two uncles, and a relative to sign a document promising not to interfere with her. A few days later, on 2\4\1995, the police informed the State Security Police in Beni Suef about this document.

On 6\4\1995, the police asked the girl to come to the station. According to the police minutes, an officer asked her why she converted to Islam. Shadyi said, "I feel this is the right religion." The officer then asked her if she wanted to meet anyone from the church and Shadyia made no objection. The police called Father Francis who was given some time with Shadya. He was then questioned by the police and a record was made of the minutes. The police asked, "What did the girl say to you?" The priest said she didn't answer him. Then the girl was asked and she affirmed that she had spoken with the priest, but that she had insisted in her belief in Islam. Later Shadyia was allowed to see her mother and her uncle and she still insisted on turning to Islam.

On 18\4\1995, Shadyia's father again went to the police station and complained that Mohammed, the neighbor who assisted in the kidnapping of his daughter, had five days earlier built a water container on his land which could affect his property. The police called Mohammed who admitted building the container, but said that this container would pose no trouble to them. The police sent some people to investigate whether or not the container was actually harmful to the land or not. But Mohammed destroyed the container before the committee came to view the site. Later on when the committee arrived, they confirmed that it would harm the land and it should be destroyed.

note: It seems there must have been an ongoing conflict about the use of water, which is not unusual in Upper Egypt, between Shadyia's family and their neighbors. Shadyia herself, was not only a minor, but also illiterate. But there was no love-story nor problems within the family reported, so it seems strange that she made the decision to turn to Islam. How could such a girl know the procedure of conversion unless someone told her. How could she ask her family to sign a document not to interfere with her unless someone had told her. Is the conflict about the use of water related to her conversion? What was the role of the local police? Why did father, according to the police minutes, state he had no problems with his neighbors, but in his letter to Sadek said that he had problems. This is also obvious from the police minutes of April 18, 1995. Was pressure put on him to make his first statement? Why did the police not ask Shadyia on March 26 why she wanted to convert and why did they wait until April 6 to asked a priest to come. Was this time used to put pressure on her? Now the impression is given that the priest was only asked to come to fulfill the legal obligations of the police.

Example 74

Factors: minor, police promises to bring girl back but do not carry this out, the Azhar refuses to accept the conversion and girl somewhere hidden.

Example 76 (pressure/police involvement)

Yvonne Mikhaal Samaan born on 6\9\1981, living in Heliopolis, Cairo, disappeared on 13\5\1996. She was not yet 15 years old. Her father wrote the Center for Human Rights and National Unity the following letter:

"I accuse Rabiaa H. M. of kidnapping my daughter because the neighbors told me that he was the last one who was seen with her." The father went on May 14 to the police and accused Rabiaa of taking his daughter. He then continues his letter writing

that the police arrested Rabiaa the same day. Later that day, Rabiaa's father called and said that the girl was with him in Abshoy, Fayoum. He would bring Yvonne back, if her father would drop the charges against his daughter. Yvonne was brought to the police in Abshoy, Fayoum and from there brought to the police in Heliopolis. Yvonne's father writes that the police minutes in Fayoum stated that his daughter was 17 while in fact she was at the time of disappearance 14-years and 8-months-old. The police in Heliopolis informed Yvonne's father that he could take his daughter back. In a letter to the prosecutor father writes: "In the police station I signed the necessary documents for receiving my daughter and I also signed a document promising that I will treat her well and take good care of her. But in spite of all these documents which I signed, the police refused to give her back to me."

Father writes in his letter to the Center for Human Rights and National Unity what happened after he got his daughter back, "I demanded a police investigation of the incident of kidnapping my daughter and the falsification of the new birth certificate stating that the girl was 17 years old. I also demanded a medical examination for the girl to see if she had been raped. The police station did something really strange. They protected the third and the forth accused and told me that my daughter doesn't want to go with me and that she wants to go to the Azhar to proclaim her belief in Islam. Because my daughter is still under-aged and I'm her father I insisted on having an investigation about what I heard from them. But they refused to carry out any investigation and refused to give me my daughter."

"On 16\5\1996 the girl went to the prosecutor with a different

statement than the one on 14\5\1996. The new statement consisted of only one page stating that the girl refused to go with her father. I don't have any idea what they wrote after this. The prosecuting attorney transferred the girl to the Azhar. The Azhar refused to let the girl proclaim her belief in Islam because she was only 14-years and 4-months-old. The girl went back to the prosecutor and the prosecuting attorney decided to give me the girl. When the girl went to Heliopolis police station where I should have had her back, the police station refused to give her to me saying " The girl refuses to go back with you."

"There was a very heavy guarding surrounding my daughter in the police station, in Security Police and in the prosecution to prevent me from having any contact with her. Is it possible that the police station and the prosecution of Heliopolis protected the third and the forth accused and did not investigate them in three different crimes:
 1) Rape of a minor girl.
 2) Kidnap of a minor girl.
 3) Falsification of a birth certificate.
 They frightened and threatened the girl, and then said that she wanted to convert to Islam.
 Until present I know nothing about my daughter. Once I heard that she lived in the house of one of the officers, and another time that she lived in the house of one of high positioned men in the prosecution. But I heard other people say that she is living in an orphanage, and there are many other rumors.

No further information is used other than the file of Mr. Maurice Sadek.
 The police initially were willing to ~~give back~~ to give the girl to her father but she refused. That might indicate that there were problems in the family and that the neighbors helped the girl to escape from her family. Of course there are also questions. Where does the police send children who do not want to remain in their family? Which law regulates that? If she is sent to an

orphanage, was it a Christian orphanage?

(N: I had several questions in the old file which you still need to ask Sadek)

Example 75

Factors: minor, initial misrepresentation of facts, family problems, involvement of sheikh Dr. Tantawi of the Azhar, 'orfi' marriage, kidnap by family and girls objection.

Maurice Sadek introduced me to the brothers of Irene Sadeq Michael (16), the youngest in a family of seven brothers and sisters, who was engaged and planned to marry in October 1996. Her fiancée had relatives in the United States so there was even the prospect of emigrating there, the dream of many young girls. But first she needed to finish her school exams. Her future seemed bright. In May, everything (N: what is the exact date? check with M.Sadek) suddenly changed. After school one day she went out with a female friend and didn't return home. Her parents started looking for her and eventually reported to the police in Daher, Cairo, that their daughter was missing. There the police told them Irene wanted to marry a Muslim and convert to Islam. Henny Sadeq, Irene's brother and a lawyer, said the family was in a state of shock. He said in May 1996: "It is impossible this was done of her own free will. We have never seen her friend before and now suddenly they claim to have known each other for two years. This guy can offer her nothing. He only sells coffee beans in Bulaq. He does not even own the store, but is only a salesman." Henny complained about the police. "They did not allow her to return to the family. That is against the new children's law of January 1996 that specifically

states that children remain until their 18th year under the jurisdiction of their parents. Instead, she and the Muslim boy are now living together in a house with police officers outside it. We are not allowed to see her. How is it possible that they could leave my sister with this guy without being married?"

At the Central Police Security Office Irene met several times with a priest. Henny complained the family wasn't allowed to see Irene alone. "During every visit the police were present. At one point my father called her, 'My daughter' and immediately the officer interfered and said, 'Be businesslike, don't call her your daughter.' How could he have done this? How can someone call a meeting with Irene free and open in the company of so many officers?" Henny went to his colleague Maurice Sadek, Director of the Center for Human Rights and National Unity. Together they went on May 11, 1996 to the Central Police Security Office but Sadek was not allowed to meet with Irene because he was not a relative. On May 18 they went together again to the Central Police Security Office. Also Irene's priest was present. This time the priest, her relatives and Sadek were allowed to see Irene. "She looked strange," Sadek said. "I am sure they must have used drugs to subdue her." But the priest, who has known Irene from the day of her birth, formulated it more carefully. "She was different. She was not as I knew her before." Henny Sadek asked for a medical examination to see if drugs were used and to determine whether she was still a virgin, but that request was refused. The family decided to bring the case before court. Irene's father and one of her brother are counselors. Henny is a lawyer and also other brothers have prominent positions

Muslim man Henny was spoke of was Ahmed Abdel Wahab (23). The family asked a bishop to intervene and he approached Dr.

Tantawi, the Grand-Sheikh of the Azhar. Dr. Tantawi allowed the bishop to sit alone with Irene and speak as long with her as she wanted. I met the bishop a few days later and he told me he was convinced that Irene had fallen in love with Ahmed without the family knowing about it. Others, who met with family members, suspect that Irene, the youngest in a family of seven, might have had problems with her family and probably wanted to escape.

Later the family heard that Irene had married Ahmed Abdel Wahab on June 5 in an 'orfi' marriage, according to Islamic law. Henny was furious about it "Irene is according to the new children's law of January 1996 a minor, that is someone below the age of 18, who is not allowed to marry or convert without the consent of their parents. Even if she was married according to Islamic law, which accepts marriages at a much younger age, her marriage is not valid according to civil law. She is, therefore, unmarried and stays without parental permit in the house of someone else. That is unacceptable in our culture."

X Henny gave me ~~the~~ Ahmed's address and I went to see him. Ahmed is a nice, good-looking young man who received me very well and explained how he got to know Irene and how he fell in love. Irene did not stay alone with Ahmed, but shared a room with other girls in Ahmed's parents' house. When I, however, asked to speak with Irene, he told me that he had to get police permission. The police told him not to speak with journalists.

Irene might have been in love, but she was still a minor. Her case was the first one in its kind where the judge was asked to apply the new children's law. The new law, inspired by Egypt's first lady, Mrs. Susan Mubarak, aims at protecting children from misuse and abuse in work, social life and in other areas of life. For centuries, it has been a custom in Egypt to marry young, ~~and~~

children are often easily influenced to enter into a marriage they do not want. This law seeks to prevent precisely such occurrences.

The new law should have given hope to the Sadeq family. A hearing was planned for July 9, 1996. "I asked to postpone it because I wanted to have a chance to study new documents presented by the prosecutor," said Maurice Sadek, the lawyer of the family, at the time. "The judge gave us a new date for August 24." But four members of the family and Irene's former fiance did not have the patience to wait until the next hearing and decided to kidnap Irene on July 15.

Irene went with Ahmed and a policeman to school to take her exams. On the way to school, their car was stopped by another car with Irene's brothers Nagy, Tharwat and Nihad Sadek, cousin Emad Aziz and fiance Adli Anis. Friends of the family, who wish to remain anonymous said that the family had arranged for this fiance after they learned about Irene and Ahmed's friendship but before Irene had converted to Islam. Ahmed was beaten and the policeman had something sprayed in his eyes.

Irene was taken out of the car and forced in her brothers' car. They took her to a church in Mostorod, north of Cairo, where they asked a monk to take care for her. But Irene screamed loudly and told them this was against her will. Sadek said, "The monk refused to cooperate after Irene started screaming and objecting to be there. They were told to leave. The family informed Irene they were going to Alexandria. But they took the road to Bilqas instead. On the road, they went to a petrol station. Irene screamed very loud and told everyone that she was kidnapped. The owner of the petrol station called the police came quickly to the spot and arrested the family. Nihad managed to escape. The police started a search for him but they have not been able to find him thus far." (N: please ask Sadek if they have found him since)

The prosecutor spoke about kidnapping Irene. Henny, Irene's brother, disagreed with the accusation of the prosecutor. He said, "We are pleading not guilty. The prosecutor should not use the word 'kidnap.' Irene is a minor who ran away but who is, until she is 18, still under parental custody. My brothers were right in trying to bring her back to the family."

In an unusual, fast procedure, the five were on July 17 sentenced to 45 days and sent to Tora-Prison which is notorious for its harsh treatment of inmates. After serving term, the judge will announce his final verdict. Attorney Maurice Sadek, says the involved family members may face up to 25 years in prison. (N: check with Sadek what happened)

The family has maintained, until the date her brothers tried to force her to come back, that Irene was kidnapped by Ahmed Abdel Wahab against her will. But if Irene were indeed kidnapped, she would have gone along with her brothers after they took her from Ahmed Abdel Wahab's car. Irene, instead, screamed to free herself and caused her brothers arrest. After this incident, it is clear that Irene must have run away from her family out of love and family circumstances.

A Christian man from Upper Egypt, commented in July 1996 that "Irene is lucky she survived. If she would have been kidnapped by a Christian family from Upper Egypt, she would have been killed. That would have set an example for others who might consider conversion to Islam."

note: The incident also shows that it is sometimes necessary for the police to protect converts from their families.

Example 76

Factors: minor, police refuses to return girl to family.

Example 76

Factors: minor, police refused to return girl to family, return after interference Minister of Interior.

On March 16, 1997, Theresa Shaker Abdallah, 14 years and 7 months old and daughter from poor Christian farmers from the district of el-Wasta in the governorate of Beni Suef disappeared. According to attorney Maurice Sadek the family filed a complaint at the local police but they refused to return the girl to the family. The family informed Coptic Orthodox bishop Athanasius of Beni Suef who telephoned with the Central Police Security Office in Beni Suef who, according to Sadek, promised the bishop to give the police in el-Wasta instructions but the police in el-Wasta, says Sadek, refused to carry this out. The bishop consequently informed H.H. Pope Shenouda on March 21 who spoke with the Minister of Interior after which she was released.

note: According to the family there were no problems between them and Theresa. Since in similar cases the girl ran away from the family because she had problems in the family this might have been the case here as well. This story raises questions about the behavior of the police because in other cases they also did not return minors to their families. See the examples 51 and 73.

Example 77

Factors: minor, psychologically ill and love.

Maurice Sadek's Center for Human Rights and National Unity sent on March 21, 1997 a fax to journalists and human rights organizations about the District Attorney in Aswan who ordered a Christian girl, a minor and ill, to convert to Islam. The translation of this text is given below:

"The center received a message from Mr. Helmy Rozeq Fakhorie, the father of a minor Christian girl (telephone no. 501393, Kom Ombo, Aswan).His minor daughter Miss Olfat Helmy Rozeq, a school girl of 16 years old (born on 24 \ 4 \ 1980), is, according the medical certificate issued by Dr. Bahget Mohammed el-Hady, psychologically ill. The message states that, a married Muslim young man, called Atef Mahmoud Ahmed, deceived the girl and made her think that he would marry her, if she converted to Islam.

A police minute was recorded in Aswan police station about the incident. The District Attorney Mr. Mohammed Moqled gave an order to help this minor, ill girl to convert to Islam.

The Center for Human Rights and National Unity expresses its revulsion of such behavior and highlights that such activity is

a continuation of the persecution which Christians are subjected to at this time.

The center appeals to all the human rights organizations, the civilian society and to all the authorities to return this minor girl immediately to her family in order to prove statements which say that Christians in Egypt are indeed well."

The fax is signed by the director of the Center, Maurice Sadek.

note: The medical certificate states that the girl suffers of a depression and that she is unable to concentrate at school which hinders her in her studies. The certificate is not dated. That makes it possible that the certificate was issued after the girl decided to convert in an effort of the family to convince the police that this conversion should not take place. The accusation that "a married Muslim young man deceived the girl" and her age makes one wonder if here is not a case of immature teenage love which is perhaps coupled to family problems. The wording of fax of Maurice Sadek is, as usual, subjective. He expresses his "revulsion" and believes this incident is proof of "persecution" of Christians in Egypt.

6.8) Miracles

Introduction:

In previous examples provided by the book, "The Lost Sheep", family problems, love and marital problems are mentioned along two examples of pressure. The stories from this book have a pastoral character. They aim to warn Christian youth to be careful and that mistakes can lead to conversion. The examples of the book serve to keep people in the church. The message is that if there are problems, it is better to turn to the church. In this book are several examples of people who converted and returned to the church. In stories from priests, churchworkers and lawyer Maurice Sadek this was less frequently found. The selection of the stories in the book create the impression that Muslims are purposely looking for Christian weaknesses to exploit these weaknesses. There is no doubt that this happens, but the book would have been better if the book would have given more examples where the person did not return to the church. Other examples from the book concern miracles. If people turn to God through prayer or through his saints, they can be saved.

Example 78

Factors: naiveté and stupidity of a Christian in the army, a group trying to enforce the conversion followed by a miracle after visiting the tomb of Father Bishop Kamal.

"The Lost Sheep" on pages 26 to 29 illustrates an example of a Christian man who went to a priest to show him evidence of whippings and torture on his back and broken teeth in his mouth. The priest asked him, "What happened to you?" He said, "Twenty years ago I served in the army and there was a Muslim officer who was using my painting skills to work for him and in return he gave me a lot of holidays. Once he told me that the Christians do not deserve someone who is as good as I. He prepared everything for me to convert to Islam. All I had to do was just signing a paper to finish the conversion. Because I was naive I agreed and told myself that I would sign just to please my commander. No one will know anything about it. After all, I'm Christian and I will remain one."

"I finished my military service and forgot all about that paper. I got married and had children. One day when I asked some of my relatives to send me a formal document of my birth certificate. My wife opened the letter and read that my name and religion were recorded differently. Very naively she kidded our Muslim neighbors about how my name and religion were written incorrectly on a formal document."

"My neighbors had doubts about the matter and when I came home, I found them waiting for me. When they confronted me with what they had heard, I confessed and answered them very naively saying that it was nothing but signing a paper. My belief had not changed."

"A few hours later, a young man wearing a traditional dress whom I had never seen before, appeared at the door. He asked me to go

down into the street with him. There, I found a group of young men, who violently pushed me into a taxi. They took me to a far-off place and hit and tortured me, but I insisted to remain a Christian."

"Later they transferred me from Cairo to another extremist group near Marsa Matruh. They forced me to work as a truck driver. Two men guarded me all the time. Once I went with them for work to Alexandria and begged them to set me free for a couple of hours. I promised to return to them afterwards. They agreed to let me go for two hours. Immediately I went to the shrine of Father Bishoy Kamel (a very famous Coptic priest from Alexandria who died about four years ago). I asked for his and Pope Kyrollos the Sixth's intercessions to set me free from my captivity. When I was at the shrine of Father Bishoy Kamel I remembered two psalms which I had memorized long ago after I had finished my military service."

"I returned to the group praying the psalms silently. Since then, whenever I went to speak with their leader I very quietly said these two psalms. Something made the leader feel disturbed as though he could not breathe. He told me to leave him. A few days later, the leader told the group to throw me out and they did. "

"As soon as they let me go, I traveled by a truck from Marsa Matruh to Alexandria. I have come to you very regretfully for my denial to Jesus, although I had not betrayed Him on purpose. "

Example 79

Factors: attraction to a Muslim man, running away and a miracle.

The Lost Sheep on page 85 writes about a Christian girl who

belonged to a simple family. She was attracted by some young men to convert to Islam and marry one of them. The girl ran away, from her family and went to live with the young man's family. She slept in the same room with his mother and sisters until all her conversion procedures were finished. How could she sleep in such a place...?!

Her dull conscience and her religious blindness were clearly evident. But her grieving mother interceded to God on her behalf with many tears.

In the darkness of the night while the girl slept, she saw Saint George beating her with a spear and firmly telling her: " You..... you are sleeping here and you let your mother burn for you... Early in the morning go back to your mother. " The girl ran home saved from the abyss of destruction.

Example 80

Factors: attracted by an young Muslim to convert, falling off the steps and a miracle.

The Lost Sheep on pages 85 to 86 speaks of Bishop Ibram of Fayoum. This bishop is known in the Orthodox church as a real 20th century saint. Many miracles are related to him. The same story is recounted in the book, Saint Bishop Ibram by Father Michael Saad, page 115.

A Christian girl was convinced by an uneducated young man to convert to Islam. She filled in an application form for changing her religion at the Central Police Security Office. She met with Bishop Ibram in the religious counseling session who tried to advise and guide her, but she refused to listen to him. Eventually, Bishop Ibram became desperate and got angry with the girl and although he was known for his love, patience and mercy he told her that " Go on your way.....God knows how to deal with

you. "

As soon as the girl left the room and reached the stairs, she fell down and was motionless. The young man told the police and accused the bishop of killing her. The bishop replied, "No.. she is not dead, just asleep." The bishop prayed on some water and threw it on the girl's face. She awoke after she had discovered the truth. When the girl asked what had happened to her, she said, " The bishop advised me and I refused to listen to him so he got angry with me. When I was going down the stairs, something from God took me and threw me on the floor. Now I can not give up Christ after I had personally touched the power of the Christian faith. "

note: Often if an accident happens after something wrong was done it is seen in Egypt, Muslims and Christians, as a punishment of God.

Example 81

Factors: prayer of Father Bishoy Kamal for a girl who wanted to convert and a miracle.

The Lost Sheep on pages 86 to 87 describes a story which happened in the church of The Apostle Saint Mark & Pope Peter The Last Martyr in Alexandria.

A girl was deceived by Satan and was determined to give up her Christian belief. Her parents had an appointment with Father Bishoy Kamel in the church who had been lifting up fervent prayers for her salvation. The girl agreed to go with her parents to meet with Father Bishoy. She arrived early before the appointment and said to her parents that, "I will not change my mind unless the Virgin Mary appears to me."

The girl sat in the church in front of the consecrated icon of

the Virgin Mary. She looked at the icon and suddenly she saw the Virgin Mary alive in the icon looking with ultimate compassion upon her. The girl couldn't resist the overwhelming sense of love and her eyes filled with the tears of repentance and regret.

After attending evening prayer and listening to Father Bishoy Kamel's sermon, the girl sat with the priest and told him of how the kind mother Virgin Mary appeared to her and about her repentance. She gave a true confession and her life changed afterwards.

Example 82

Factors: pastoral care of Father Bishoy Kamel

The Lost Sheep on pages 87 to 88 reprinted a story which was published in "Sout el-Ra'ie" ("The Shepherd's voice") magazine in December, 1995 under the title "The Wonderful Guest".

Father Bishoy heard that one of the Christ's daughters was going to deny her faith. He asked his wife to prepare their suitcases to spend some time in a far place - although the girl was in Alexandria. He implied that they would be away for a long time.

Father Bishoy went with his wife to the girl's home and asked her family if they could spend some time as guests to have a break from the people following Father Bishoy wherever he goes. All the members of the girl's family welcomed them warmly.

The girl was worried at first.... but realizing that Father Bishoy is a very busy priest and has a very active ministry and that he loves to pray the Masses and evening prayers... gave her a relief that this situation will not last for long.

The loving father took every opportunity to speak with the girl and his favorite place became a chair next to house's main door. Time passed and Father Bishoy never got bored and never left his place because nothing concerns him more than the girl's salvation. After many days, Father Bishoy left everything he had for the salvation of one soul and after many prayers and intercessions for that soul which was redeemed by Jesus, the girl's heart responded. She cried for that sacrificial love and regretted every wrong thing she was doing.

Example 83

Factors: a caring pastor

The Lost Sheep on pages 91 to 92 takes a story from the book " Father Bishoy Kamel: The Man of God, Part II, page 97."

Father, I'll never forget that day when you were running to deliver that poor girl who was deceived by a soldier in the army who lured her until she became an easy prey for him... On that day you were running with all your spiritual power from one place to another, from the police station to the military prosecution and the girl. While we were about to get into the car with the girl, we found a trap made by a young soldier with a group of some other young soldiers, they attacked us violently and tried to take the girl. In a few seconds we were surrounded by hundreds of men and there was a police car in the site as if it was specially prepared to arrive at that moment. They took the girl by force and put her in the police car. But you (Father Kamel) held on the police car and prevented it from moving.. and you were screaming " I'm not going to leave my daughter.. I'll not let her. " The

car moved and you were still holding on its rear and when it speeded it dragged you behind it. The people had pity on you and they were screaming at you to leave the car not to get hurt. Finally the car moved very fast and your hands couldn't hold it any longer and I felt as if there was a divine power protecting you from falling on the ground. (N: what is wrong with the taps in this part?)

At that moment my father I couldn't help myself crying when I saw you as your Savior giving yourself for the lost sheep.. You didn't give up but continued your attempts until the Lord gave the girl back to you and your loving heart for Jesus rejoiced.

7) The church's response

Yearly, thousands of Christians convert to Islam. Naturally bishops, priests and church workers have spoken about what they thought needed to be done.

Spirituality

"Visits of priests to families in need are very essential," said a priest in a poor area. "It helps the families spiritually and we get to know their problems and try to solve them. Each priest in our area is serving about 600 families and he visits each family approximately once every two months. Each visit lasts from half an hour to one hour, but this is not enough."

Christian education

"We need to build nursery schools for Christian children in areas where there are no churches to give them a Christian education," said a priest. "There are many areas and villages without

churches and it is very difficult for us to get permits to build new churches. We need to build Christian centers in order to bring Christians who live in these areas together to hold spiritual meetings for them. such places could also provide handicraft classes for people to help them start projects of their own. We also need buses to transport poor families who are unable to pay public transportation to the church. Thos would enable them to worship God in a church and to participate in the Holy Communion."

A church worker added "We need to give more care to Sunday schools for children in areas where no churches exist, but financially we are not able to this. I believe if we give these children a good Christian education, the number of problems would be reduced."

Another church worker said "We need to give more attention to marriage counseling. We have to teach our youth what a Christian marriage and love are. We should organize conferences for our youth on this subject."

Secular education

Most of the poor cannot afford it to send their children to school. Public schools are government subsidized but the small school fee of LE 30 or US\$ 8.85 per child a year and school necessities, such as, books, school uniform, school bag, notebooks are estimated to cost LE 50 or US\$ 14.75 per year. These cost for the very poor are a large obstacle. A Coptic charity association in a certain area pays for these needs, but there are many areas without such a charity organization.

Many children need to supplement their education with private lessons. Public school classes with 50 or more children are not unusual and teachers are often underpaid. This does not improve the quality of the lessons. The abovementioned Coptic

charity association estimates the expenses of additional private lessons to be LE 30 per month. For high school students, a scientific calculator is obligatory. The association buys the cheapest calculator costing LE 36 for those who cannot afford one.

When Poor children are old enough to earn an income, they are often taken out of school. This hinders their changes getting out of this vicious circle of poverty.

Work opportunities

"We need to help them to find work," a priest said. "Especially work that will keep them away from pressure of Muslims. I think handiwork, which does not require much skill such as weaving and sewing for women, and carpentry and carpet making for men, is good. It is better to help people to become productive with education and skills so that they will not need to look for help from others."

Supporting individual families and people with finances

None of the people interviewed like this suggestion. It drains the limited financial means of the church and it is not a structural solution. A Coptic charity association teaches the poor to sew their own shirts which are sold below the cost price to the local people. The sewing machines project does not cover all the needs and the association buys shirts for LE10 or US\$ 3 each and sells them for only LE 2. A poor mother with two sons had only LE 2 and couldn't afford buying two shirts for her sons. She told the man responsible for the project she could buy only one shirt this year. "Can I please pay you the two pounds on four monthly installments of LE 0.50 (US\$ 0,15) per month.?" She could not pay the installments, so she went to another church worker and asked him to give her L.E 0.50 every month.

The association gives clothes to poor children at Christmas and Easter. Once it gave a young girl a dress costing LE 40. Later, the association found out that the girl's family sold the dress for LE 5 in order to buy food.

Health care

Several Christian doctors offer free medical examinations to poor people. But paying for the expenses of medicine, an operation, performing X-rays are something the poor cannot afford. One priest who was formally a medical doctor asked the people in his village to bring medicine they have not used to a special pharmacy so that it could be distributed freely to the poor who could not afford to pay for it.

The police

Lawyers, priests and church workers want the authorities to look at how to improve the conversion procedures. The police needs to be better instructed on how to deal with conversions. Violations must be dealt with properly.

The report shows many policemen violating the Egyptian law and principles of good conduct. They were rarely corrected by their higher authorities.

According to the new Egyptian Family Law of 1.1.1996, anyone who is less than 18 years old is considered as a minor and has no right to make decisions such as marriage or convert to another religion without the approval of his or her guardian. According to another law children below 16 years old are not allowed to convert. This difference in two laws makes it possible to escape the application of the new Family Law if minors of 16 or 17 years old convert to Islam.

The police allows even Christian minors below 16 years old to leave their families who are consequently placed in Muslim families or a Muslim orphanage. Churches strongly reject this practice.

Changing Egypt's law

"Those who converted to Islam and want to return to Christianity should be able to do this legally and change the religion on their identity cards so that they and their children can live a normal Christian life," another priest said. "Or foreign Christians should help them to travel to a country where they can live as Christians."

Present activities and constraints

Churches are active. There are Christian charity organizations addressing some of the needs, but their work is far from sufficient. A recent survey about social and spiritual activities of Cairo's churches showed that the number one problem is a lack of finances. Educated and dedicated staff to carry out all church plans are few in number.

The Christian Charity Association helps about 40 families without any income. Each family lives in a room with an average rent of LE 30 a month. The association pays this rent. They help wed newly wed couples to furnish their houses, install water and electricity, and pay burial and other costs.

The charity organization visited receives donations from Christians but the group's income is far from sufficient to address all the needs. They want to buy illustrated Bibles because 300 out the 400 poor families they serve do not own a Bible. These people have little education and it is very hard for them to read the normal Arabic Bible. But finance for 300 illustrated Bibles is LE 12,000 or US\$ 3530 and is lacking.

The charity organization wants to buy another twenty sewing machines costing LE 7000 or US\$ 2000 to help poor women obtain an income for their families. The money is not there.

Money for almost every thing is in short supply. Families cannot be supported with small individual projects. There is no money to establish a kindergarten. Patients cannot be helped without

medicine. Not all expenses for housing, basic food and drinks, education and other expenses can be paid for. The dilemma this association faces is not rare. There are many other associations in similar different circumstance. There are also large areas not at all served by charity organizations.

8) Conclusions

With an estimated 50.000 conversions of Christians to Islam in the period of 1988-1990 (Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 1996) these conversions are a phenomenon. A large part of these concern youth below 21 years of age. In most cases where the Christian family or Christian activists presented a conversion of a minor as a kidnap, implying the use of physical force, this proved not to be the case. But children are much easier pushed in a wanted direction than grown-ups. This makes it necessary to take even more care that conversions of youth below 21 years old takes place in a correct way without any form of pressure from whatever side.

Most conversions are related to lack of knowledge of Christian faith, poverty, family problems, immature teenage love and naivety. A bishop made the remark that Christians should not blame Muslims for these conversions but they should blame themselves for not having given enough spiritual and material care to these people. But Muslims are active in Da'awa or Islamic mission and promote conversions where ever they can. Most often the means used are perfectly alright but there are strong indications of abuses by some Muslims including manipulation. Material gains play an important role. It is, however, not wrong a religious community helps new converts to that community. It, however, becomes wrong if money, a spouse, a job or other material gains are offered on condition of conversion. It happens girls are deceived for which the law does not give any protection.

Several Christians who saw their children convert, claim that there is an organization behind it. Some Christians mentioned Islamic organizations. Thus far there is not sufficient proof there is an organized effort on the side of Muslims to convert Christians to Islam.

In most cases we looked into the Egyptian police has never been neither fair nor merciful to the Christians. If the girl wants to convert, the police will support her, even if she is younger than 16 years old and, according to the law, should be returned to her family. The police often pressed the family of the convert to sign a document of non-interference. Sometimes it was indeed needed to protect the girl but in other cases that is questionable. The police is reported to insult,

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beat and sometimes even torture. Police abuses are seldom corrected. Complaints about abuses to the Ministry of Interior or the President are not answered.

People who converted but a few days, months or years later find they were deceived and want to return to Christianity cannot do so. They find themselves trapped. If they would try to do this, they would be beaten, threatened and possibly even tortured.

Some Christian activists put the blame for most conversions on Muslims. That is, however, wrong and harmful. It escalates tensions between Muslims and Christians and doesn't help the Christian community at all. Exaggerating complaints also leads to a loss of credibility which goes on the expense of cases where really basic rights are violated. Churches tend to refuse to admit the scope of the problem. The consequence is that Egyptian Christians in relatively rich parts of Egypt do not know what happens to poor Christians in their country. Foreign organizations likewise mostly do not know about the spiritual and material needs among poor Christians which makes this part of the church in Egypt a forgotten church.

There are lots of stories about conversions and 'kidnapping girls'. That creates a feeling of fear among Christians. Many of them like to portray the situation as the poor weak and vulnerable Christians and the aggressive wicked Muslim. By spreading wrong information that image is strengthened. That is dangerous because it leads to polarization and increasing misunderstanding. Churches should therefore be willing to look also into their own failures and try to address those issues in a positive way.

The reporting about sensitive issues like conversions need to improve. One-sided information, providing only part of the total story, creates a distorted picture in the West. A proposal for a news cooperative to improve reporting is made in addendum 9.4.

It would be recommendable for that purpose to have a center to study Muslim Christian relations in Egypt. But for such a center to succeed it would need to be independent from the government of Egypt, any Islamic or Christian religious institution but at the same time needs to be able to maintain good links with all of them.

Cairo, April 8, 1997

9) Addendum:

1. Translation of the cassette "The 26 Lions of Pope Shenouda".
2. Roz el-Yousef's article on Yvonne

3. El-Shaab, article on Mohammed who changed his name to Michel
4. Improving reporting on sensitive religious issues; proposal for a news cooperative.

9.4) News Cooperative:

1) Introduction.

A group of journalists interested in reporting about religious issues and dialogue wants to improve its reporting by cooperating in reporting about these issues. Their cooperation is for the time being called "News Cooperative" but this name should be later replaced by a more appropriate one.

"Setting the historical record straight." That is the aim of the Royal Jordanian Institute for Interfaith Studies and the aim of a News Cooperative (NC) in Egypt. There is much to set straight in the perception of Muslims and Christians on each other. Not only for historians but also for journalists.

Egyptians are known for their humor, wits and self-criticism, even in times of difficulty. They share a common history in which Muslim- and Christian-Egyptians, ethnically one nation, over and over again stood shoulder to shoulder to oppose foreign domination. Both Muslims and Christians occupied leading positions in the revolution of Saad Zaghlul in 1919 against the British which was followed by years of intense Christian participation in Egyptian political life which was reduced after the revolution of 1952.

The atmosphere of tolerance and national unity received a strong blow after late president Sadat's policy to give more space to political Islam which was resisted by Muslims with a different interpretation of Islam and many Christians. These developments resulted in rising tensions between Muslims and Christians in the Seventies. Extremist thinking grew and resulted in violent attacks on those who do not agree with their way of thinking; which included government officials, liberal thinkers and Christians.

2) What to report.

The Service is focused on news that creates an understanding of Egyptians of all beliefs, Muslim-Christian relations in particular, and issues they face in common. People or communities covered by the service find themselves fairly represented. Dialogue between Muslims and Christians is a vital issue that is not to be neglected as it is very practical and helps people of different persuasions live together. Articles on Islam are written and create an understanding of the cultural and religious atmosphere people live in; orthodoxy and

liberal, militant and non-militant, traditionalists and western-oriented, etc.

3) How do we report

The NC presents news in the perspective of a wider scope of developments. In interpreting facts the focus is on explaining it in a complex social fabric.

Reporting is a big responsibility. Individual people and communities should not be endangered. If individuals ask for confidentiality it will be respected. The NC is aware that some politicians in the West, unfortunately, link the amount of aid, which can contribute to social rest and economic growth to the benefit of all Egyptians, to their human rights record.

Responsible reporting is therefore:

- Presenting all news; both positive and negative, fairly, including aspects that might not fit back-and-white views,
- balanced; covering people of all beliefs in an equal way,
- giving backgrounds,,
- checking facts,
- using terminology with care,
- hearing all opinions,
- reporting on the spot,
- developing relationships of trust,
- reporting with care,
- drawing conclusions with care.

Responsible reporting avoids biases in any direction.

Not only negative news.

The majority of Muslims in Egypt oppose extremist thinking and are generally tolerant to believers of other religions. A concentration in reporting on examples of violence and intolerance create a one-sided and therefore unfair view of modern Islam in Egypt which in turn might lead to a feeling of not being treated fairly. It is therefore a matter of responsibility to report about the wider context of human rights, religious liberty and attacks of extremists. Elements of cooperation and dialogue should not be neglected.

Balanced

Reporting on violent attacks or any human rights issue should not be done in such a way as if they are limited to certain people; tourists, prominent Egyptians or Christians. Any attack or human rights issue should be explained in its full scope - describing all who are affected.

Backgrounds

Writers explain to the foreign readers why local Christians and Muslims think the way they do. All thought, including extremist thought, need to be carefully analyzed. Roots, proportions and influence need to be made clear.

Extremist thought is not only due to lack of knowledge about others but also a result of poverty. Development work and other activities to reach the poor therefore has our attention.

Verification

Sometimes claims of human rights abuses are made without sufficient verification which increases the feeling of Muslims of being treated unjustly which in turn can lead to Muslims undervaluing issues which are important for Christians and Christians undervaluing issues which are important for Muslims which does not lead to a better understanding of Muslims and Christians in Egypt.

example:

Some Christians claim that Christian girls who convert and marry Muslims are kidnapped by Muslims. By not defining the word 'kidnap' the impression is created that girls are taken against their will from the streets which is a very serious accusation and which, if this would be a general practice, would harm Muslim-Christian relations. Reality, as can be seen in this report, is more complicated.

Presenting such cases one-sidedly is not contributing to harmonious relations. Articles about such a sensitive subject or other sensitive subjects needs careful consideration and verification of facts.

Terminology

A careful use of terminology is needed. A one-sided attention on human rights, extremism and political Islam strengthens the perception in the West that most Muslims are 'fundamentalists' without defining the term well. Fundamentalism is often equated with conservative, political and sometimes even militant Islam which is, however, not doing justice to the great variety of opinions within Islam, including those who express more moderate views.

All opinions

The NC does justice to the great variety of opinions among Muslims and Christians; conservative, liberal and of different political convictions.

On the spot

Reporting cannot be done from a distance. If needed people and sites are visited to give a balanced perspective.

Relationships of trust

In most cases it is only possible to collect information on human rights and religious liberty if there is a relationship of trust which needs time to develop. People who provide information are sure they speak confidentially if requested. Only people who are interviewed determine which information is confidential and off the record for background information of the journalist, which information can be used without quoting names and which information is open.

Care in reporting and quoting

Care in reporting should avoid leanings in certain directions, insinuations, etc.

- restraining quotes of individuals calling for destruction of other people or property,

example:

El-Shaab published an article on Mohammed who became Michael in which the author cited the angry mother who said that churches should be burned and priests killed. That is not conducive to a good atmosphere between Muslims and Christians.

- no one should be called an apostate unless someone has made this claim him or herself,
- no claims on the activities or statements of others should be reported without verification.
- no quotes from people on s.o. else's point of view without consulting that person or an official representative.

Careful in drawing conclusions

Only after taking into account the above mentioned considerations conclusions can be drawn, taking into account with fairness what was found without any over- or understatements.

4) Improving reporting.

Journalists, who are subscribing to the basic principle of dialogue, and who participate in the NC read each others work and comment when and where needed in order to improve the reporting of the NC.

5) Biweekly overview of Egyptian press and newsreports

The Egyptian press gives a reasonable view of Muslim-Christian relations. This press is, however, not accessible to most western journalists. It is therefore

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Name: Saborra Zaky Khilla (15) & Amml Fawzy Menyas (19)

Address: El-Mandara village, Markaz bahary, Dairout.

Both are uneducated and were attending classes to learn how to read and write.

The kidnapper's name: Faiza Said Abdel Hafez

The kidnapper's address: Azbet abou gabal, Dairout.

They left home at 9 PM on 13\2\1995 to go to their class and they didn't come back.

The available documents in the dossier

- Photocopy of Amml Fawzy birth certificate.
- Shokralla Habieb's complaint to the Minster of interior.
- A letter from Shokralla Habieb to Nabilla Mikhaal.

Both were kidnapped on Monday 13\2\1995 by a lady called Mrs. Faiza Said Abdel Hafez (Azbet bogabel, Dairout). Mr. Shokralla Habieb, Saborra's uncle went to Dairout's governor who phoned Mr. Ahmed Kadry the chief of Dairout police station and asked him to receive Mr. Shokralla. As soon as the girls saw their fathers they ran and hugged them and asked to go back home with their fathers. Then at this moment the officer on shift assailed the girls with insults and screamed at them saying "Is this a children's game." and he kicked the fathers out of the police station.

Example 2 - Samia