

After Attacks in Paris, U.S. Government's First and Foremost Responsibility Is Safety of Americans

Over the past several days, we have been overwhelmed by the grisly scenes and heartbreaking stories from Paris. The radical Islamist jihadists have struck again, with devastating impact—nearly 130 dead and scores critically injured. These people are the latest victims of this death cult that has sprung up within Islam, which is determined to murder and slaughter its way to power—absolute power—both in Europe and the Middle East.

Now we find there is evidence of at least some of the terrorists having made their way through France, masquerading as refugees from the Syrian civil war. As literally millions of Mid-Eastern refugees engulf Europe, security specialists tell us that ISIS terrorists have infiltrated their ranks and are using a refugee cover to reach their destinations in Western Europe and the U.S. ISIS has issued a warning to America that we are next. Make no mistake about it; they are deadly serious. Since they have been at war with us since Sept. 11, 2001, we ought to be at war with them.

The French Prime Minister declared that the attacks amount to an act of war. He is right, whether President Obama understands it or not. Now, our government is lying to us by telling us that any Syrian refugees that we take in will be well and thoroughly vetted and checked out. How? Syria is a failed state; it has no records to check. Unless we want to welcome terrorists and murderers into the homeland, then we need to take drastic measures. Anyone seeking to enter the country from that area of the world ought to be given, at the

very least, a polygraph test or a lie detector test to see if they are jihadis. Even that might not work, since lie detector tests are notorious for being inaccurate when dealing with psychopaths—and these people are psychopaths, people without a conscience. My view is that we should provide aid and assistance to the Syrian refugees, but because the potential terrorist risk is much too great to bring them into America, a “safe zone” should be created in Syria in which to provide assistance and assist neighboring countries that are aiding refugees as well.

Romans 13 tell us God ordained government to punish evil and to reward those who do that which is right. We must insist that our government protect first and foremost and always the people of the United States from those who would do them harm.

How do you balance Christian compassion with a divinely ordained mandate of the government to punish evildoers and reward those who do that which is right? For instance, if someone murders my wife, as a Christian, I do not have the right to kill that person or to take any kind of personal revenge. In fact, I am commanded to pray for that person and to love them as someone for whom Jesus died. However, I do have the right to expect the civil magistrate to punish them to the fullest extent of the law, once they have been found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt by a jury of their peers.

Just so, as Christians, we need to have compassion for Syrian refugees who are fleeing the horrible violence of their civil war. Does that compassion compel us to grant them access to our country as refugees? I think not. Especially when ISIS has declared they are going to use the refugee flood as a Trojan horse to infiltrate terrorists into the U.S., duplicating the dastardly deeds they perpetrated in Paris. Being passionate does not compel us to expose our jugular veins to our enemies.

As a nation, we can provide these refugees a safe zone in their own country, guaranteed with American air and military

power. We can offer to feed, clothe and house them in refugee camps or help them relocate to adjacent countries, like Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. However, since we cannot properly vet them, I believe our government has a responsibility to say that no one enters the U.S. as a refugee from Syria until ISIS is defeated. Our government's first priority must be the protection of the American people.

BREAKING: Islamist Gunmen Attack Hotel, Take 170 Captive

The hostage situation is now over. Police found 27 dead. For the latest information, [click here](#).

Gunmen shouting Islamic slogans attacked a luxury hotel full of foreigners in Mali's capital Bamako early on Friday morning, taking 170 people hostage, a senior security source and the hotel's operator said.

The raid on the Radisson Blu hotel, which lies just west of the city center near government ministries and diplomatic offices in the former French colony, comes a week after Islamic State (IS) militants killed 129 people in Paris.

The identity of the Bamako gunmen, or the group to which they belong, is not known.

Northern Mali was occupied by Islamist fighters, some with links to al Qaeda, for most of 2012. Although they were driven out by a French-led military operation, sporadic violence has continued.

The security source said as many as 10 gunmen had stormed the building, firing shots and shouting “Allahu Akbar”, or “God is great” in Arabic.

The Chinese state news agency Xinhua said several Chinese tourists were among those trapped inside the building.

The company that runs the hotel, Rezidor Group, said it understood that there were two gunmen.

“According to our information, two people are holding 140 clients and 30 employees,” it said in a statement quoted by the BBC.

A senior member of the hotel’s security detail said two private security guards had been injured in the early stages of the attack, which began at 7 a.m.(0700 GMT).

Witnesses in the area said police had surrounded the hotel and were blocking roads leading into the neighborhood.

The U.S. Embassy tweeted that it was “aware of an ongoing active shooter operation at the Radisson Hotel,” and instructed its citizens to stay indoors.

An Islamist group claimed responsibility for the death of five people last March in an attack on a restaurant in Bamako that is popular with foreigners. {eoa}

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How the ‘Junk Man’ Could Save

Your Life

In today's increasingly unstable and dangerous world, the "Junk Man" is teaching people how to "survive on nothing, except junk," popular television show host Jim Bakker says.

"They call him the 'Junk Man' because he creates amazing things from junk," Bakker said on an episode of *The Jim Bakker Show*. "He's going to teach you some survival methods. This could save your family and your lives with some of the things he's going to teach."

The "Junk Man," or Bill Whaley, is a former Vietnam War pilot who taught survival skills in the military.

Today, Whaley, 66, is in the middle of writing his first book, *Living on Junk*, and writes a bimonthly newsletter, "The Junk Man Chronicles," teaching people how to reduce expenses, "live off the grid" and even survive in the event of calamity on what other people throw away.

"I do this to help my fellow man who might have lost his job," Whaley told *Charisma News*. "He may not have any money. An elderly lady may need an air conditioner, but she can't afford one. I make them out of two-gallon buckets and car fans. All she has to do is fill it with cold water, put some ice in it and turn it on. Therefore, she can stay fairly cool in one room.

"It's survival. That's what it is. It's showing you how to take what you already own and do something with it. The more you do for yourself the less control the system has on you."

Whaley, who lives in a "self-sufficient" home in Missouri and offers preparedness talks at Bakker's Ready NOW Expos, grew up on a farm in Missouri and learned at an early age how to live off the land and use whatever was handy for life's basics.

“I realized all the stuff I was using came from God,” Whaley says. “He put it on this earth in a basic form—whether it be trees, the rocks or the food grown from the ground. It’s been that way since day one. Why not use it?”

In the military, Whaley learned how to make the best use of whatever was needed to survive and ensure military equipment worked properly.

“I was a medevac pilot and always enjoyed being self-sufficient, not relying on somebody else or another system,” Whaley says. “With that said, I have been showing people for years how to take trash and junk that you already have, and are going to throw away, and convert it into something you can use.

“For example, I use a self-contained solar cart. I can take it out in the field and work on my fence line with my saws and drills. So I have electricity wherever I need it.”

Whaley also shows people how to create a mobile garden using recycled lawnmower wheels and other household items.

“You don’t have to bend over, spend money on gas, and you can sit there and garden and grow food in less space,” Whaley says.

Whaley teaches people ways to cut or eliminate their utility bills, use methane gas from their septic tanks to cook and heat their homes, along with other money-saving tips.

“I’ve got the sun to cook with,” Whaley says. “I have methane gas to heat my travel trailer and Mother Nature to provide everything I need. If you learn the basics of the earth, you will never be without. Somebody is always throwing away what you need to make something out of. So why buy it when it’s being thrown away?”

To subscribe to “The Junk Man Chronicles,” send \$22 to Bill

Whaley, 108 N. Belleville Street, Freeburg, IL 62243. To find out more, Whaley can be reached at *cleartotaxi62@*.

France and Israel: Obama's Double Standard

Israel's prime minister has called the latest terrorist attacks "an act of war." He called the attackers "barbarians," vowed to wage a war of "no mercy" against them, and ordered bombing strikes on "terrorist training camps," even though they were located adjacent to medical clinics, a museum, and a soccer stadium.

Remarkably, neither the Obama administration nor the United Nations condemned Israel's strong response to the terrorists. Has the world finally come to its senses? Does it finally understand that Islamic terrorism, whether against Israelis or anybody else, is an attack on us all?

Actually, no, because I misspoke.

It was French President Francois Hollande, not Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who called the latest terrorism (in Paris) an "act of war." It was Hollande who called the attackers "barbarians," and vowed to wage a war of "no mercy" against them. It was the French air force that bombed medical clinics, a museum, and a soccer stadium located near terror camps in the Islamic State-controlled Syrian city of Raqqa.

When Netanyahu says that Palestinian Islamic terrorists have carried out "acts of war," he is accused of exaggerating the threat. When he calls the killers "barbarians," he is denounced as a racist. If Israel strikes terrorist sites that

are situated near civilian areas, Israel is accused of “war crimes” and “disproportionate” responses.

Remember when Secretary of State John Kerry sarcastically grumbled, “(expletive) of a ‘pinpoint’ attack” after one Israeli strike in Gaza? We don’t hear Kerry calling the French bombing of those Raqqa medical clinics a “(expletive) of a ‘pinpoint’ attack.” We don’t hear National Security Adviser Susan Rice demanding that Hollande apologize for describing Islamic killers as “barbarians.” We don’t hear President Barack Obama calling for “both sides” to “exercise restraint” as he always does when Israel responds to Arab terrorists.

On the contrary: Obama administration officials are boasting that the U.S. provided “military intelligence” that assisted the French in their bombing of Raqqa. This, a cynic might say, makes the Obama administration complicit in the bombing of a medical clinic, a museum, and a soccer stadium.

Israel has always understood the nature of this conflict. Now, it seems, France does, too.

Yes, every terrorist attack is an act of war. No, the terrorists are not “the JV team,” as President Obama once put it.

Yes, the terrorists are barbarians. No, we should not “show respect even for one’s enemies” and “try to understand ... and empathize with their perspective and point of view,” as Hillary Clinton said in her Dec. 3, 2014, speech at Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C.

Yes, terror targets must be struck, regardless of whether or not they are situated near civilian sites.

And yes, the terrorists must be fought with “no mercy” and completely destroyed—not merely “contained” or “degraded,” as President Obama often says.

France's leaders have belatedly awakened to the fact that the civilized world is at war with the forces of Islamic terrorism. Israel is one front in that war. France is another. And if the Obama administration does not wake up and fight, then America will soon become the next front.

Stephen M. Flatow, an attorney in New Jersey, is the father of Alisa Flatow, who was murdered in an Iranian-sponsored Palestinian terrorist attack in 1995. For the original article, visit [.](#)

Spain Issues Arrest Warrant for Netanyahu Over 'War Crimes'

A Spanish judge issued arrest warrants for several top Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, over a 2010 raid Spain considers a "war crime," according to reports.

The warrants stem from the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid, during which nine activists were killed during a confrontation.

At the time, a prosecutor for the International Criminal Court did not have "sufficient gravity" to justify further action, though there was "reasonable basis" to consider Israel's actions war crimes, according to the *BBC*.

Now, Spain's Judge Jose de la Manta found a loophole, which would allow Netanyahu among others to be detained and questioned if he ever entered the coastal country, *Yahoo News* reports.

Though the warrants have been issued, foreign ministry spokesperson Emmanuel Nachshon claims the action is just an attempt to irritate Israel.

“It’s a provocation,” he says. “The Israeli Embassy in Madrid is in touch with Spanish General Prosecutor in order to close the file as promptly as possible. We hope that this will be over soon.”

After the 2010 raid, the United Nations Human Rights Council issued a report claiming Israel’s military broke international laws.

Since the raid and the report, members of the international community have attempted to pursue action against Israel, including Turkey, England and South Africa.

Paris Mastermind Suspect Killed in Air Raid

The suspected Islamic State mastermind of the Paris attacks was among those killed in a police raid north of the capital, France confirmed on Thursday, bringing an end to the hunt for Europe’s most wanted man.

Authorities said they had identified the corpse of Belgian national Abdelhamid Abaaoud from fingerprints in the aftermath of Wednesday’s raid, in which at least two people died including a female suicide bomber after a gun battle with police.

“It was his body we discovered in the building, riddled with impacts,” a statement from the Paris prosecutor said, a day

after the pre-dawn raid. The prosecutor later added that it was unclear whether Abaaoud had detonated a suicide belt.

Abaaoud was accused of orchestrating last Friday's coordinated bombings and shootings in the French capital, which killed 129 people. Seven assailants died in the attack and a suspected eighth is still on the run.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls broke the news of Abaaoud's death in parliament on Thursday to applause from lawmakers who were voting to extend a state of emergency for another three months.

"We know today ... that the mastermind of the attacks—or one of them, let's remain cautious—was among those dead," Valls told reporters.

Even before last week's attacks, Moroccan-born Abaaoud, 28, was one of Islamic State's highest-profile European recruits, prominently profiled in the group's slick online English-language magazine Dabiq, where he boasted of traveling across European borders staging attacks.

The group, which controls swathes of Iraq and Syria, has attracted thousands of young Europeans, and Abaaoud was seen as a leading figure in attracting others to the movement, particularly from his home country Belgium.

He claimed to have escaped a manhunt after a raid in Belgium in 2013 in which two other militants were killed. His own family has disowned him, accusing him of abducting his 13-year-old brother, who was later promoted on the Internet as Islamic State's youngest foreign fighter in Syria.

Before the attacks, European governments thought Abaaoud was still in Syria. "This is a major failing," said Roland Jaquard at the International Observatory for Terrorism.

While quickly tracking him down will be seen as a major

success for French authorities, his presence in Paris will focus more attention on the difficulty European security services have in monitoring the continent's borders.

French officials have called for changes to the functioning of the EU's Schengen zone, which normally does not monitor the entry and exit of citizens of its 26 countries. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have arrived in Europe as refugees in recent months, including someone who used a passport found at the scene of one of Friday's attacks.

Firefight, Explosions

Early on Wednesday, police swooped on the house where Abaaoud was holed up in the Paris suburb of St. Denis. Heavily armed officers stormed the building before dawn, triggering a firefight and multiple explosions.

Officials had said on Wednesday that two people were killed in the raid, including a female suicide bomber who blew herself up. Forensic scientists were trying to determine whether a third person had died. Eight people were arrested.

Two police sources and a source close to the investigation told Reuters the St. Denis cell had been planning a new attack on Paris's La Defense business district. A source close to the investigation said the female bomber who was killed might have been Abaaoud's cousin.

The victims of the deadliest attacks in France since World War Two came from 17 different countries, many of them young people out on a Friday night at bars, restaurants, a concert hall and a soccer stadium.

Islamic State says it carried out the attacks in retaliation for French air raids against its positions over the past year.

France has called for a global coalition to defeat the group and has launched air strikes on Raqqa, the de-facto Islamic

State capital in northern Syria, since the weekend. Russia has also targeted the city in retribution for the downing of a Russian airliner last month that killed 224.

The aftermath of the attacks could see common cause between Western capitals and Moscow, more than a year after the United States and European Union imposed financial sanctions on Russia over its annexation of territory from Ukraine.

Russia and the West are divided over Syria, with Moscow supporting President Bashar al-Assad and Western countries saying he must leave power to end a four-year-old civil war. Moscow launched air strikes in Syria six weeks ago and says it is targeting Islamic State, although most of its strikes have hit areas controlled by other groups opposed to Assad.

There are signs however that the recognition of a common threat since the Paris shootings and the Russian air crash could prompt more efforts to cooperate.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker wrote to President Vladimir Putin this week, suggesting closer trade ties between the 28-nation EU and a Russian-led economic bloc, linking them to progress on implementing a ceasefire in Ukraine.

In the letter, seen by Reuters, Juncker underlined the importance of good relations between the European Union and Moscow, "which to my regret have not been able to develop over the past year". He said he had asked Commission officials to study options for closer ties between the EU and the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union of former Soviet states.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius said he was surprised by the letter, which he said did not reflect a common view of EU member states and made no reference to EU sanctions.

International Coordination

Paris and Moscow are not coordinating their air strikes in Syria, but French President Francois Hollande is due to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Nov. 26 to discuss how their countries' militaries might work together.

Two days before that, Hollande will meet U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington to discuss the role of a coalition in any unified effort against Islamic State.

France is one of several European countries participating in the coalition's strikes against Islamic State targets in Iraq, and two months ago became the only European country to join strikes in Syria as well.

Obama on Thursday reiterated the U.S. position that eradicating the group was tied up with ending the civil war in Syria, which could not happen as long as Assad was in power.

"Bottom line is, I do not foresee a situation in which we can end the civil war in Syria while Assad remains in power," he told reporters in Manila on the sidelines of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. {eoa}

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Pastor Kong Hee Facing Up to 12 Years in Jail

Singapore Pastor Kong Hee is facing up to 12 years in prison following his recent conviction for diverting funds to bolster his wife's singing career, *The Strait Times* reports.

The Public Prosecutor has requested maximum sentences for six City Harvest Church leaders, including a sentence of 11 to 12

years for Kong.

Last month, the six church leaders were found guilty of misusing about \$50 million in church funds, including \$24 million to bolster the musical career of Kong's wife, singer-pastor Ho Yeow Sun.

The prosecution submitted its sentencing recommendations to the court on Nov. 6. Kong and the others are due back in court Friday for sentencing.

So far, Kong, 51, and CHC fund manager Chew Eng Ham, 55, have indicated they plan to appeal the sentence.

"I think it's likely (for Kong to appeal), but I can't confirm right now, realistically we have to see what happens on Friday," Kong's lawyer Jason Chan told *The Strait Times*.

Chew told the newspaper that, "I am standing by my defense and what I testified during the trial, and will make an appeal."

Defense attorneys have argued that the church suffered no financial losses and that Kong and the others did not profit.

Regarding the conviction, the church's management board said in a statement that they were deeply saddened. The statement included the judge's remarks about the case.

"I have no doubt that they loved CHC and had no wish to do any harm to it, and I accept that, in using CHC's funds for the Crossover (project), they believed that they were using church funds for an evangelistic purpose that was not just permitted but positively mandated by the vision and mission of CHC, and which was supported by the vast majority if not the entirety of the congregation," the judge wrote.

"But saying that they believed they were using 'church funds for church purposes' is not an answer to the charges; so long as they intended to use CHC's funds in such a manner that amounted to a wrong use in the knowledge that they were not

legally entitled to do so, the element of dishonesty would be made out."

In their statement, church board members said they recognized that the judge had "acknowledged that the motive of the six was their love for the church and that they believed they were using church funds for an evangelistic purpose."

"As the board, we want to assure everyone that we will not let this trial happen in vain," the board members wrote. "Over the past three years, the board has taken significant steps to improve our governance, to fulfill the purpose and mission God has placed upon this church in wiser and lawful ways. And we will continue to do so as we journey toward our future."

Sarah Palin Will Run for Office If God Leads Her

In her new book *Sweet Freedom: A Devotional*, former Alaska governor and Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin wrote that Americans sense the nation they know and love is "changing so fast it might become unrecognizable."

But there is still hope.

"While many wring their hands and wonder where our freedom has gone, you're going to discover true freedom—the kind that can't be taken away—is well within our grasp," she wrote.

Offering to do her part to keep America free, Palin told *Good Morning America* co-host Robin Roberts that she's willing to run for office again.

"No particular office, but what it would take is just knowing

that the American public would be ready again for someone 'going rogue,' calling it like they see it and having the experience that they believe could be put to good use in the name of service," Palin told Roberts. "If I really felt that was there in terms of support, then I'd be more than willing to serve."

Palin, who was speaking to Roberts about her new book, said she would put it in "God's hands because you just never know what door may be open, and if a door is open, I'm built to run through it, charge through it and live life vibrantly and do all I can to help others."

The new book, released Monday, is different than many devotionals in that it delves into the "issues of the day" and how the Bible offers solutions to the challenges people face, including the fears many may be experiencing following the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and ISIS' subsequent threats to attack the United States.

"When it comes to fear, we are given promise after promise about the omnipotence of God, telling us: 'Fear not. Put this into My hands ...,'" Palin said. "He tells us, kind of like my mom or your mom told us, 'Go to sleep. Give it to God. He's up all night anyway. Dump your fears and challenges on Him, knowing that He will provide answers for you, and He expects us to take some action with the answers He provides.'"

In the book, Palin writes about the challenges she's had recently—many of which are chronicled in the devotional.

"When it rains it pours, but I believe God allows that to happen in our lives to prepare us for whatever is next so we are equipped to do whatever is next—so we are kind of geared-up ...," Palin said.

"Plato told us to be nice to everyone because everyone is fighting a battle. I want to encourage people: Don't be fearful, to live life vibrantly, and if you are seeking

answers to all these challenges personally and politically, you are going to find them in the Word.”

After His Wife Was Killed in Paris ISIS Attacks, This Man Does Something Astounding

The Islamic State slaughtered 129 in Parisian attacks, but the aftermath was far more devastating.

In taking the lives of the 129, the terrorist organization aimed to destroy exponential families, destroying joy and planting fear in the hearts of the world.

But Antoine Leiris, whom terrorists widowed last week in a siege on the Bataclan, refuses to bow to their agenda.

Leiris took to Facebook with an open letter to ISIS, defying the group’s “victory” by refusing the hatred they want to creep into his heart.

The following is the post, translated in English by *Good Morning America*:

“Friday night, you took an exceptional life—the love of my life, the mother of my son—but you will not have my hatred I don’t know who you are and I don’t want to know, you are dead souls. If this God, for whom you kill blindly, made us in his image, every bullet in the body of my wife would have been one more wound in His heart.

“So, no, I will not grant you the gift of my hatred. You’re asking for it, but responding to hatred with anger is falling

victim to the same ignorance that has made you what you are. You want me to be scared, to view my countrymen with mistrust, to sacrifice my liberty for my security. You lost.

“I saw her this morning. Finally, after nights and days of waiting. She was just as beautiful as when she left on Friday night, just as beautiful as when I fell hopelessly in love over 12 years ago. Of course I am devastated by this pain, I give you this little victory, but the pain will be short-lived. I know that she will be with us every day and that we will find ourselves again in this paradise of free love to which you have no access.

“We are just two, my son and me, but we are stronger than all the armies in the world. I don't have any more time to devote to you, I have to join Melvil who is waking up from his nap. He is barely 17-months-old. He will eat his meals as usual, and then we are going to play as usual, and for his whole life this little boy will threaten you by being happy and free. Because no, you will not have his hatred either.”

Egypt Delays Copt's 'Faked Facebook Blasphemy' Acquittal

An Egyptian Christian jailed for 38 months on unsubstantiated charges has had his expected acquittal delayed again to February next year, his lawyer said.

Bishoy Garas was sentenced to six years in prison from September 2012 for offending Islam, the then Egyptian President Morsi and a Muslim sheikh's sister. However, the charges, relating to Facebook posts, were found on a fake Facebook page opened in his name.

He posted warnings on his own Facebook page about the fake account and alerted cyber police.

Still, he was sentenced despite new claims by his friends of a named hacker, as well as cyber investigation reports attesting to his innocence.

Garas was due to have a ruling in favor of his acquittal on Nov. 14, but the judge put it off again, owing to "the issue's sensitivity," the lawyer Magdy Farouk Saeed said.

"The judge adjourned the case till Feb. 13, 2016. He does not wish to issue his ruling at this time in the full presence of the court," he added.

"This is due to the sensitivity of the issue," Saeed said, hinting that a "discreet" hearing with fewer attendees may be more appropriate.

Garas' lawyer, however, was still confident about his client's upcoming acquittal.

"The judge will rule in Bishoy's favor. It is as good as done," Saeed said, noting that his client was allowed to stand outside the dock during the hearing.

Garas was also not subject to any further questioning by the judge, he explained.

On July 25, Cairo's senior Court of Cassation had ruled against the six-year prison sentence earlier meted out to the Copt.

It took Garas until Oct. 9, however, to walk free, due to "intransigence by the prosecution, and prison authorities dragging their feet," his lawyer said.

A hearing had been first set by the Court of Cassation for Sept. 12. On the day, Garas was unable to appear.

“Bishoy was (then) still being held in the New Menya Prison. The prosecution, due to hardline Islamic tendencies among its members, kept dragging its feet,” Saeed told *World Watch Monitor* last week.

While Garas may have finally been freed from prison, he is still not free to go home.

‘Advised’ Not to Go Home

Garas’ father, Kameel, told *World Watch Monitor* his son was “advised” not to go home for fear for his life from possible attacks by Islamists.

On Friday, Oct. 9, Garas was released from the Tima police station in Sohag, Upper Egypt, having had the usual “interview” with the National Security Directorate first.

“They advised us that my son should not head back home for fear for his life from possible attacks by radical Muslims,” his father said. “We were told to wait for things to calm down after the elections have concluded,” he added, referring to the country’s first round of parliamentary polls, which saw a massive defeat for the hardline Salafist Al-Nur party.

However, a second round of voting is due this Sunday, Nov. 22.

For now, things are “normal and stable,” Kameel Garas said, adding that the rest of the family can now go about business as usual.

This contrasts sharply with events at the beginning of the ordeal. Back in 2012, the family had grounds to fear for their safety amid angry mobs swarming court hearings and vows to kill Garas and kidnap members of the family.

According to Kameel Garas, his son was aghast by insults he had supposedly written on his Facebook page.

“Surprised, he quickly opened his laptop, and found another fake Facebook account with the same data—his name, photo, everything. There were bad pictures and insults on this fake account,” the father said.

The primary school teacher immediately posted warnings on his Facebook page about this other fake account. He also called the cyber police and told them what had happened, asking them to investigate.

When Garas was summoned the next day to the Tima police station, he assumed the chief detective there wanted to investigate it. But the teacher arrived with his laptop, to be confronted by Sheikh Mohammed Safwat Tammam, from the ultra-conservative Salafist movement within Sunni Islam. The cleric had filed a formal complaint against the then 24-year-old Copt, accusing him of insulting Tammam’s sister, the then Muslim Brotherhood President Morsi and the Islamic religion, on his Facebook page.

Despite Garas’ remonstrations, the young teacher was taken the next day to appear in court before the Tima prosecutor; a large mob of angry Muslims gathered to protest against him.

The local prosecutor was convinced of Garas’ innocence there and then, the father recalled. But to calm the crowds, Garas was remanded for four days’ custody anyway.

By then, two of Garas’ friends had identified and confronted the culprit who had created the fake Facebook account, a young Coptic acquaintance identified only as “Michael.” After recording “Michael’s” confession on a CD disk, the two went with Garas’ father on Aug. 2 to testify to a prosecutor in nearby Tahra, but there Garas’ detention was extended for another 15 days. For the next month, hearings on the case were adjourned, lawyers failed to appear and court-ordered evidence was late in arriving. Several times large protests erupted outside the courtroom, as angry Salafists and Muslim

Brotherhood supporters shouted death threats against the Copt.

On Sept. 18, 2012, a presiding Judge of Tima Misdemeanour Court convicted Garas on three counts of insult and blasphemy, sentencing him to a total of six years in prison. An appeal hearing before another judge of the Sohag Misdemeanour Court on Sept. 27 upheld the ruling.

The teacher was promptly fired from his job, and then insulted and beaten by Muslim prisoners during his three months in the Sohag prison, his father recounted.

Not Much by Way of Damages

But now in view of the expected acquittal, what can Garas expect by way of compensation?

When asked about any possible damages according to the Egyptian legal system, his lawyer said, "It's a pittance!"

"After a defendant is acquitted, one can hope for a mere five pounds' sum (64 U.S. cents) in damages for each day spent in jail. To get that, it's a tortuous process which can take up to three years of litigation. Even then, the judge may decide to award no damages, or reduced remuneration," Saeed added.

But what matters most now for Saeed is to clear his client's name.

"This time, the defendant appears before a court which believes in his innocence, and which has evidence before it to back this belief," Saeed said.

The Court of Cassation in Cairo is a safer venue, being more removed from "pressures by angry local crowds of Salafist hardliners," the lawyer added, expressing more confidence in the higher court judges' proficiency and integrity.

Hope in a Dark Place

When asked about his trial, Garas had this to say: “Three years and two months in jail: two months held at the police station in Tima, two months in protective custody in Qina, one year and six months in the Wadi el-Gedid prison, and two years and two months in Menya (prison). Yet I had done no wrong, no crime!

“But thank God in all things. We are subject to the will of Him who works all things together for good,” Garas told *World Watch Monitor*.

“The time I spent in prison made me draw really closer to God. It was more or less a retreat time for me with Him.”

“Despite the dangerous charges levelled against me, I could see God’s hand throughout. Even fellow inmates in both the Wadi-el-Gedid and Menya prisons were kind to me. They could see that I was being unjustly treated,” he added.

It wasn’t all a walk in the park for him, though.

“At first I passed through a very hard time. I felt hopeless. I’d ask God why He’d do that to me. Then I’d have only a Bible for a comfort. And that surely worked!”

Recalling how after his release he briefly made a secret visit to his family, Garas said: “I went back home at night. I spent one day at home with mum and dad. The next day at dawn, while it was still dark, I was off again”.

Once he has his innocence formally pronounced, Garas will have to sue in the Administrative Court to be able to regain his job—a process which could consume three more months, he said.

But the family is taking no chances. “Even after an expected acquittal, we’re not taking him back home just yet. For his safety, we are arranging alternative accommodation” Kameel Garas said. “We are asking everyone to lift Bishoy in prayer!”