

Egyptian Court Gives Family 15 Years in Prison for Converting to Christianity

A criminal court in Egypt has sentenced a mother and her seven children in Beni-Suef to 15 years in prison for converting to Christianity from Islam. The court also sentenced seven other people involved in the case to five years in prison.

Nadia Mohamed Ali converted to Islam from Christianity 23 years ago when she married Mohamed Abde-Wahhab Mustafa. After he died, she planned to convert back to Christianity, along with her family.

The family attempted to get new identity cards in 2004. Ali and her sons cooperated with seven employees to change their names on their identification cards to Christian names, as well changing their place of residence.

One of her sons was arrested in the headquarters of the Information Center two years later when police noticed he had changed his name, and he confessed that the documents had been altered illegally.

Human rights advocates say this case is a sign of what's to come under President Mohammed Morsi's new constitution.

According to Fox News, conversions like Nadia's have been common in the past, says Samuel Tadros, a research fellow at Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom. But Egypt's new Shariah-based constitution "is a real disaster in terms of religion freedom."

"The cases will increase in the future," Tadros said. "It will be much harder for people to return to Christianity."

Succeeding the secular reign Hosni Mubarak, who is now in

prison, Morsi was elected last June, and has since pushed the new constitution through.

Secular and liberal groups, as well as Coptic Christians—roughly 10 percent of Egypt's population—oppose the constitution and protested against it at the time it was passed, due to the mix of Islamic-based Shariah law and politics.

“Now that **Shariah law** has become an integral part of Egypt's new constitution, Christians in that country are at greater risk than ever,” FoxNews reported Jordan Sekulow, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice, as saying.

“This is another tragic case that underscores the growing problem of **religious intolerance** in the Muslim world,” Sekulow added. “To impose a prison sentence for a family because of their Christian faith sadly reveals the true agenda of this new government: Egypt has no respect for international law or **religious liberty**.”