

How This Little Boy Wants to 'Protect the Christians and Prevent Attacks'

A young Christian boy from a small village in Egypt's Minya region, who saw his father killed by Islamic militants, dreams of becoming a police officer so he can prevent similar attacks.

Mina was only 10 years old when he and his brother Marco, aged 14, saw their father murdered, as a group of armed men ambushed their car on a desert road in rural southern Egypt in May last year.

They were following a bus full of pilgrims that was attacked first. All the Coptic men who would not accept Islam were shot. Then the gunmen heard Ayad's pick-up truck approach.

Marco recalls how the attackers shot the men in the head, while shouting "*Allahu Akbar*" (Allah is the greatest).

"After killing my father and all the workers, one of the terrorists wanted to kill us but another one of them said to him: 'Leave them alive to tell people what we did'," he told World Watch Monitor last year. Their father died in Marco's arms.

Shortly after the incident, Mina was interviewed by Reuters, recounting the horror of the experience.

Now, only in big pictures in the house is their father still with the boys and their two sisters, though the street where they live has also been named after him: Ayed Habib Tawadros Street.

Earlier this year, their mother, Hanaa, expressed concerned about the boys, Mina in particular, but now she says he is

“doing better”.

The brothers play a lot of football and the exercise helps them process what happened, she says.

However, in the absence of their father, she says they now feel very responsible. During his school holidays, Marco has continued his father’s work, making church bells, but Mina no longer joins him. “They always want to make sure that at least one man is in the house with me and their sisters,” Hanaa explained.

The emotional impact of what they went through has affected the boys’ lives in other ways too. In school, they struggle to focus and have started to lag behind. But their mother says that, 15 months on, they have at least begun to dream again. Marco wants to become an engineer, while Mina says he hopes to become a police officer so “I can protect the Christians, and prevent attacks like what happened to my father”. {eo}

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