

AI INDEX: MDE 12/63/97

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Egypt: Amnesty International appalled by mass killings of civilians

Amnesty International was appalled at reports that approximately 70 civilians were killed this morning in an armed attack at a tourist site near Luxor. The victims reportedly included at least 61 foreign tourists and four Egyptian civilians.

"We strongly condemn the deliberate killings of civilians by armed opposition groups," Amnesty International said. "Such killings are human rights abuses which should not be tolerated under any circumstances. Today's attack represents an unprecedented escalation in violence in Egypt."

These latest killings bring the number of civilians killed in Egypt since January 1997 to more than 100, as recorded by Amnesty International.

Three members of the security forces and six of the attackers were also killed in today's attack, carried out by unidentified gunmen, and approximately 85 people are reported to have been injured. Although no armed group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack, since 1992 hundreds of civilians, including foreign tourists and members of the Coptic Christian minority, have been deliberately killed by armed opposition groups, particularly *al-Gama'a al-Islamiya* (Islamic Group).

The civilians killed reportedly included Japanese, Swiss, French and German tourists. They were outside a temple in a popular archaeological site near Luxor at around 10am this morning when armed men opened fire indiscriminately.

Amnesty International is calling on all Egyptian armed groups to put an immediate end to the killing of civilians, and is urging leaders of armed opposition groups to publicly condemn these practices.

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