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EGYPT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPALLED BY THE LATEST DELIBERATE KILLINGS OF CIVILIANS

Amnesty International was appalled to learn that earlier this week 10 Coptic Christian civilians were deliberately killed and five injured in an Upper Egypt church by four armed men believed to be members of the armed Islamist group, al-Gama'a al-Islamiya.

“We strongly condemn these latest deliberate killings by armed groups,” Amnesty International said today. “These killings are human rights abuses which should not be tolerated under any circumstances.”

The attack took place in the early evening of 12 February in the town of Abu-Qerqas near Minya in Upper Egypt. Four armed and masked men, reportedly members of al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, burst into Saint George church and opened fire at 30 young Coptic Christians who were listening to a sermon given by a priest. Nine people, including one woman, reportedly died instantly. Two brothers 'Adel Mikhael 'Abd al-Mallak aged 26 and Milad Mikhael 'Abd al-Mallak aged 25 were amongst the dead, as well as a young woman, Ulfat Butros Shaker, who was only 17-years old. The tenth person, Ayman Redha Girgis, a 21-year-old medical student, died later in hospital of gunshot wounds.

Scores of civilians, including dozens of Coptic Christians and some foreign tourists, have been deliberately killed in Egypt by armed Islamist groups, including al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, since 1992 when these groups took up arms against the government. Before Wednesday's killings the latest attack of similar scale on Coptic Christians was on 24 February 1996 when six people were shot dead. Amnesty International condemned the killings.

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