

# Egyptian mosque turned into house of torture for Christians after Muslim Brotherhood protest

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Islamic hard-liners stormed a mosque in suburban Cairo, turning it into torture chamber for Christians who had been demonstrating against the ruling Muslim Brotherhood in the latest case of violent persecution that experts fear will only get worse.

Such stories have become increasingly common as tensions between Egypt's Muslims and Copts mount, but in the latest case, mosque officials corroborated much of the account and even filed a police report. Demonstrators, some of whom were Muslim, say they were taken from the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in suburban Cairo to a nearby mosque on Friday and tortured for hours by hard-line militia members.

"They accompanied me to one of the mosques in the area and I discovered the mosque was being used to imprison demonstrators and torture them," Amir Ayad, a Coptic who has been a vocal protester against the regime, told [MidEast Christian News](#) from a hospital bed.

Ayad said he was beaten for hours with sticks before being left for dead on a roadside. Amir's brother, Ezzat Ayad, said he received an anonymous phone call at 3 a.m. Saturday, with the caller saying his brother had been found near death and had been taken to the ambulance.

"He underwent radiation treatment that proved that he suffered a fracture in the bottom of his skull, a fracture in his left arm, a bleeding in the right eye, and birdshot injuries," Ezzat Ayad said.

Officials at the Bilal ibn Rabah Mosque said radical militias stormed the building, in the Cairo suburb of Moqattam, after Friday prayers.

"[We] deeply regret what has happened and apologize to the people of Moqattam," mosque officials said in a [statement](#), adding that "they had lost control over the mosque at the time."

The statement also “denounced and condemned the violence and involving mosques in political conflicts.”

The latest crackdown is further confirmation that the Muslim Brotherhood’s most hard-line elements are consolidating control in Egypt, according to Shaul Gabbay, a professor of international studies at the University of Denver.

“It will only get worse,” said Gabbay. “This has been a longstanding conflict, but now that the Muslim Brotherhood is in power, it is moving forward to implement its ideology – which is that Christians are supposed to become Muslims.

“There is no longer anything to hold them back,” he continued. “The floodgates are open.”

Gabbay said the violent militias that allegedly tortured Ayad work hand-in-hand with police and may, in fact, be beyond the control of increasingly unpopular President Mohammed Morsi. While he may benefit from roving bands that attack demonstrators, they also undermine his claim of being a legitimate leader.

“Egyptian society is split over the Morsi regime, and it is not just a Coptic-Muslim split,” Gabbay said. “The less conservative elements of the Muslim society are increasingly uneasy with the Muslim Brotherhood. The Christian Copts are an easy target, but they are not alone in their mistrust of the Brotherhood.”

Experts agreed that the Copts, who comprise roughly 10 percent of the nation’s 83 million people, are not alone in their opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, which took power in hotly contested elections following the 2011 ouster of longtime President Hosni Mubarak. Moderate Muslims and secular liberals are increasingly uncomfortable with the Islamization of the government.

Sheikh Ahmed Saber, a well-known imam and official in Egypt’s Ministry of Endowments, has blasted Morsi’s justice ministry for allowing persecution of Copts. “All Egyptians in general are oppressed, but Christians are particularly oppressed, because they suffer double of what others suffer,” Saber told MCN.