

# How Libya's Martyrs Are Witnessing to Egypt

Murders spark largest outreach ever amid new freedoms and new threats.

Jayson Casper in Cairo/ FEBRUARY 23, 2015 (CT)

*Who fears the other?*

*The row in orange, watching paradise open?*

*Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?*



Image: Bible Society of Egypt Arabic tract (outside)

Undaunted by the slaughter of 21 Christians in Libya, the director of the Bible Society of Egypt saw a golden gospel opportunity.

"We must have a Scripture tract ready to distribute to the nation as soon as possible," Ramez Atallah told his staff the evening an ISIS-linked group released its gruesome propaganda video. Less than 36 hours later, Two Rows by the Seawas sent to the printer.

One week later, 1.65 million copies have been distributed in the Bible Society's largest campaign ever. It eclipses even the 1 million tracts distributed after the 2012 death of Shenouda, the Coptic "Pope of the Bible." [A full English translation is posted at bottom.]

The tract contains biblical quotations about the promise of blessing amid suffering, alongside a poignant poem in colloquial Arabic. "The design is meant so that it can be given to any Egyptian without causing offense," said Atallah. "To comfort the mourning and challenge people to commit to Christ."



Isaaf Evangelical Church, located on one of downtown Cairo's busiest streets, hung a poster on its wall at eye-level with pedestrians. "We learn from what the Messiah has said," it read over the background of an Egyptian flag. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you..."

Pastor Francis Fahim said the poster was meant to express comfort to all Egyptians, Muslim and Christian.

As CT reported on Thursday, the beheadings by the Islamic State in Libya have resulted in unprecedented sympathy for Egypt's Christians, who are increasingly finding common identity across denominational lines. The martyrdoms have also allowed Copts a platform to witness to the realities of their faith, as they publicly forgave the terrorists.

But their testimony may come with risk. Prior to the beheadings, the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party speculated on its website that the Copts may have been abducted because they were evangelizing.

The claim was baseless, but CT examined similar 2013 accusations leveled against Christians in Libya in the wake of the first modern-day Coptic martyrdoms outside of Egypt. In the detainees' possession was devotional material meant for the substantial community of Coptic migrant workers.

By the end of the fair, SSP had sold more than 7,000 New Testaments and given away more than 17,000 copies of the *Jesus* film.

"Following our two revolutions [January 25, 2011 and June 30, 2013], the relationship between Muslims and Christians has improved," he said. "Muslims have begun to want to know more about Christianity. We are here openly, there are no problems, and people are coming."

The presence of Christian publishers predates the revolutions. SSP has sold the ***Jesus* film** at the fair since 2008, and Christian publishers have been present since the early 1990s.

But what is new is their boldness. After the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood from power, Christians have experienced an unprecedented visibility in the public square. And the free availability of the *Jesus* film stands in stark contrast with other recent censorship decisions.

"Some feel the freedom in Egypt allows them to express themselves without restraint," said Atallah. "But this should be tempered by wisdom to ensure the long-term welcome for Christians."

Because Christians are not completely free, some push against the limits while others seek to minister prudently within them. Both approaches were employed among participants at the fair.

The Bible Society, which offers 700 products, has participated in the fair since 1996. Its newest offering is a coffee-table book of the Sermon on the Mount.

"Our goal is to make the Scriptures accessible to both unchurched Christians and interested Muslims,"

While Christians in Egypt welcome their newfound favor, Atallah issues caution. The freedom they currently enjoy is neither complete nor fully secure.

"The price of keeping Egypt free from the Islamists has been at the expense of the newly acquired human rights," he said. "Though the vast majority of Egyptians supported this 'war' on Islamist extremists, it did mean that the only way to do it was to return to a police state run by the army."

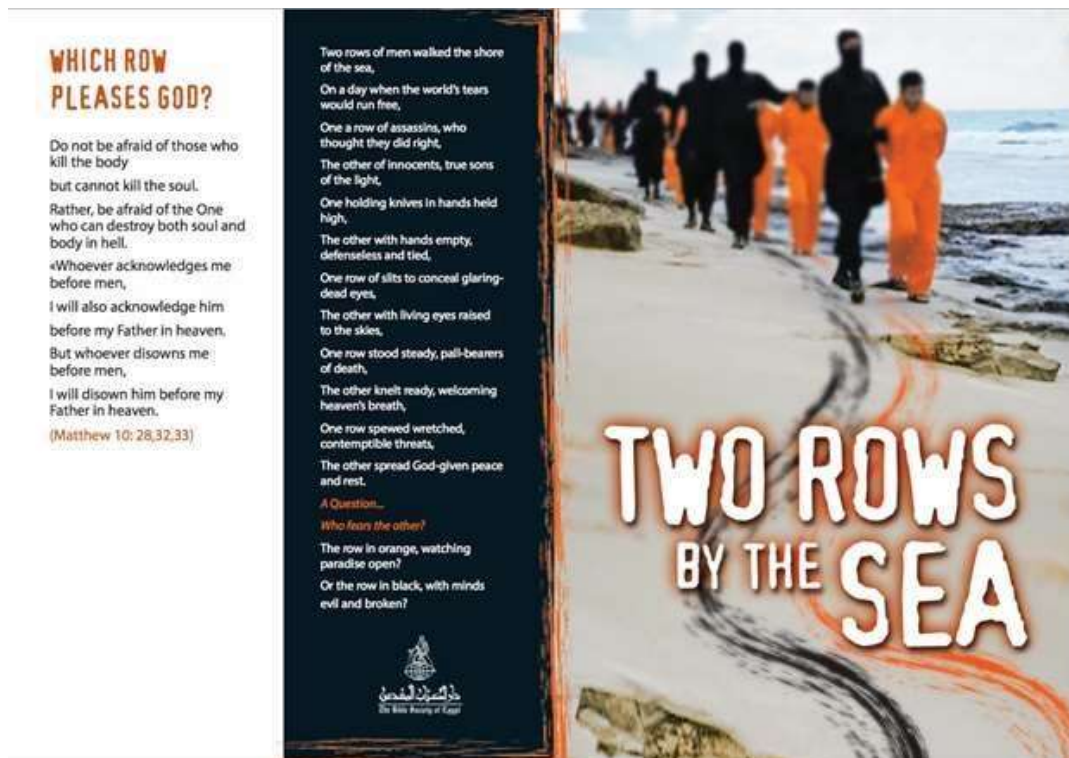
Atallah remains optimistic, but measures his words carefully. The book fair is an opportunity, and the Islamic State killings have united society. Gospel tracts find welcome today, while Brotherhood books are banned. But only two years ago, Brotherhood president Mohamed Morsi opened the book fair. The pendulum can swing both ways.

"We have been here 130 years," Atallah said of the Bible Society, which recently opened its 15th branch in Egypt. "We want to be around another 130, and make the Bible available to whoever wants it."

[Below are the Bible society tracts in [English](#) and [Arabic](#).]

*“The time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.*

*They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you.(John 16:2-4)”*



**WHICH ROW PLEASES GOD?**

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

«Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

(Matthew 10: 28,32,33)

Two rows of men walked the shore of the sea,  
On a day when the world's tears would run free,  
One a row of assassins, who thought they did right,  
The other of innocents, true sons of the light,  
One holding knives in hands held high,  
The other with hands empty, defenseless and tied,  
One row of silts to conceal glaring-dead eyes,  
The other with living eyes raised to the skies,  
One row stood steady, pall-bearers of death,  
The other knelt ready, welcoming heaven's breath,  
One row spewed wretched, contemptible threats,  
The other spread God-given peace and rest.

*A Question...*  
*Who fears the other?*  
The row in orange, watching paradise open?  
Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?

**TWO ROWS BY THE SEA**

Logo of The Holy Family of Nazareth

*"When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and **Jesus standing at the right hand of God.**" "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

*At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "**Lord, do not hold this sin against them.**" When he had said this, he fell asleep."* (Acts 7:54-60)"

## WHICH ROW UNDERSTANDS?

Dear friends,  
Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering,  
as though something strange were happening to you.  
But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ,  
so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.  
If you are insulted because of the name of Christ,  
you are blessed,  
for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.  
(1 Peter 4: 12-14)

A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think  
he is offering a service to God.  
They will do such things  
because they have not known the Father or me.  
I have told you this, so that when the time comes  
you will remember that I warned you.  
(John 16: 2-4)

## WHICH ROW SEES?

When they heard this, they were furious  
and gnashed their teeth at him.  
But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit,  
looked up to heaven  
and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.  
"Look," he said, "I see heaven open

and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."  
At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices,  
they all rushed at him, ...  
While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed,  
"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."  
Then he fell on his knees and cried out,  
"Lord, do not hold this sin against them."  
When he had said this, he fell asleep.  
(Acts 7: 54-60)

## WHICH ROW WILL PREVAIL?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?  
Shall trouble or hardship or persecution  
or famine or nakedness  
or danger or sword?  
As it is written:  
"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."  
No, in all these things  
we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.  
For I am convinced that neither death nor life,  
neither angels nor demons,  
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,  
neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from  
the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
(Romans 8: 35-39)

فصاحوا بصوت عظيم وسدوا آذانهم،  
وحصموا عليه بنس واجتذ.  
وأخرجوه خارج المدينة ورموه...  
فكانوا يرمون استفانوس وهو يدعو ويقول:  
«يا أيها الرب يسوع، اقبل روحي»  
ثم جثا على ركبتيه وصرخ بصوت عظيم:  
«يا رب، لا تحم لهم هذه الخطية»  
وإذ قال هذا ارتقد.

(أعمال ٧: ٥٤-٦٠)

## ممن منهم غالب؟

من سيقبلنا عن تحية المسيح؟  
أيضا أم حريق أم الصعق؟  
أم جوع أم حرى  
أم خطر أم سيف؟  
كما هو مكتوب:  
«إنا من أجلك نمدت كل النهار»  
قد حسبنا بئس قتم للمسيح»  
ولكننا في هذه جميعها  
نعتظم انتصارنا بالذي أحيانا.  
فإنى نبتن أن لا موت ولا حياة،  
ولا ملامنة ولا رؤساء ولا قزبات،  
ولا أمور حاضرة ولا مستقبل،  
ولا علو ولا عمق، ولا خلقية أخرى،  
تقدر أن تفصلنا عن  
تحية الله التي في المسيح يسوع ربنا.

(رومية ٨: ٣٥-٣٩)

## ممن منهم فاضح؟

أيها الأجيال،  
لا تستعجبوا بالتوبيخ المشمقة التي تتكلم حادثة،  
لأجل امتحانكم، كأنه أمانيكم أمر قريب،  
بل كما اشتركتم في الآم المسيح،  
الفرحوا لكن تفرحوا في استعلان مجده أيضا مشتهجين.  
إن عثرتم باسم المسيح،  
فطوبى لكم،

(طرس الأولى ١٢: ١٤-١٥)

لأن روح المجد والله يجعل عليكم.

فاني ساعة فيها ينظر كل من ينظركم

أنه يقدم بدمعة للده.

وستفتعلون هذا بكم

لأنهم لم يعرفوا الآب ولا عرفوني.

لكني قد كلمتكم بهذا حتى إذا جاءت الساعة

تذكرونني التي أنا فلتة لكم.

(يوحنا ١٦: ٢-٤)

## ممن منهم شايف؟

فلما سمعوا هذا خفقوا بقلوبهم

وصربوا بأسانهم عليه (استفانوس).

وأما هو فتخص إلى السماء

وهو سمع من الروح القدس،

فراى مجد الله، ويسوع قائما عن يمين الله.

فقال: «ها أنا أنظر السماوات مفتوحة،

وابن الإنسان قائما عن يمين الله».

## Jerusalem's Copts mourn Egyptian Christians beheaded in Libya (The Jerusalem Post)



Coptic Christians in Jerusalem. (photo credit:REUTERS)

## Libya's 21 Christian Martyrs: 'With Their Blood, They Are Unifying Egypt'

As Coptic Christians mourn ISIL beheadings, they praise the response of their government and Muslim neighbors.

**Jayson Casper in Cairo/ FEBRUARY 18, 2015 (CT)**



“There has been a very strong response of unity and sympathy,” said Andrea Zaki, the newlyelected president of the Protestant Churches of Egypt. “People are describing Copts as Egyptians, first and foremost, and with their blood they are unifying Egypt.”

Since the January 25 revolution (part of the 2011 Arab Spring), and in particular after the June 2013 demonstrations that led to the removal of Mohamed Morsi as president, Egypt has suffered a rash of terrorist attacks. The government—as well as most Christians—pin responsibility on Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood.

Sidhom rejoices that Muslims do as well. “After June 30, Copts stopped feeling like a lonely minority as they clung firmly to moderate Muslims,” he said. “Egyptians have learned the lesson that looking to political Islam for solutions leads only to fiasco.”

But not all Egyptians agree. The Muslim Brotherhood denies terrorism links and has condemned the killings in Libya. But Morsi supporters still demonstrate in significant numbers, despite the imprisonment of 3,000 of their top and mid-level leaders.

It may be a very difficult time for Copts,” said Kharrat, despite his firm agreement that most Muslims have sympathy for Christians. “I expect tens or hundreds of victims in the coming months.”

Recent polls suggest only 3 to 4 percent of Egyptians view the Islamic State in positive terms. But if such aggression is to come from this small minority, it might be most expected in Upper Egypt. It is from that region that many kidnappings of Copts occur and ransoms are paid, as CT reported last February.

It is also a place of great poverty, forcing 1.5 million Egyptians to look for work in Libya before the Arab Spring. Today only about 40,000 foreigner workers remain. (In the wake of 2013 detention of dozens of Copts in Libya, CT examined whether Coptic evangelism was really on the rise in Africa.)

“The spirit now is especially good with Muslims. Everyone is condemning the incident and expressing their sympathy,” he said of his Maghagha district, 30 miles north of Samalout. “The followers of Morsi are still anticipating he will be restored to power. But as they see the government is staying and expressing its respect for Christians, they will return to their homes and stay there.”

This thought is the central feature of nearly all Coptic advice to Christians in the West: Support Egypt.

Sidhom speaks openly of his “grudge” against the US administration, and no longer holds hope that American organizations can help. Zaki asks Western citizens to pressure their governments to see the “reality” and designate the Brotherhood as a terrorist entity. Kharrat asks for tourism and investment, especially in Upper Egypt.

**But all ask for prayer.**

“We are praying for God to change the hearts of those who have been raised on extremist thoughts,” said Anton, “and that this generation of Sisi will be different.”

*“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you **the crown of life**. (Revelation 2:10)”*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUwpfld1Zro>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKJ5exVTe1g>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwyCGjSBCm4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpE2cLdVsk8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2TwhEL2EPc>

*In His Victory, Hyun*