



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Egypt – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 12 December 2011**

### **Information on blood feuds, including information on any police protection available.**

An article published in the Egyptian magazine *Egypt Today* refers to the custom of blood feuds as follows:

“A greater importance is placed on ancestry, kinship ties and tribal lineage in Upper Egypt. Strong, too, are the sense of honor and the concept of the blood-feud or vendetta. This has led to outbreaks of group violence, including revenge killings. A feud is another form of political rivalry. ‘The practice of the vendetta in Upper Egypt has positive, not negative, implications because it averts aggression by offering a means of collective security [from] any group that trespasses against another group, whether rich or poor, because it knows well that aggression will be met with violent retaliation,’ Rashwan maintains. Not all disputes break out in violence, though. Customary law has strong roots in Upper Egypt and reconciliation councils are highly formalized. Many of the disputes are settled within these unofficial councils. By comparison, Rashwan points out, there are fewer incidents of violence in Upper Egypt than in Cairo. ‘The violence in Upper Egypt is predictable. You won’t find random acts of violence as witnessed in the slums of Cairo or elsewhere.’ ‘Upper Egyptians do not see the issue of vendetta as a problem,’ adds Choukry Fouad, a retired diplomat who was born in Assiut in 1932 and served as Egypt’s ambassador to Yugoslavia. ‘They think this is something natural. Cairo newspapers write about it with shock and amazement, as if it were something strange and uncivilized. In Upper Egypt, it is not considered something negative. On the contrary, it is considered something positive. They see it as a tradition that needs to be respected.’” (Egypt Today (October 2004) *The Saeedis Awake*)

A *BBC News* report states:

“Vendettas are common among clans in southern Egypt, being pursued equally bitterly within faith communities as between Christians and Muslims.” (BBC News (20 April 2009) *Christians killed in Egypt feud*)

A *BBC News* report on the murder of 22 members of the same family, in a paragraph headed Deaths 'avenged', states:

“The slain Hanashats had been planning to attend the trial of two family members in the town of Gerga. They have been accused of killing one of the Abdel-Halims last April. The attack on their convoy was apparently to avenge their deaths. The family feud, which has been running for a decade, is thought to have been sparked by a fight between children. Both families live in the village of Beit Allam, near Sohag.” (BBC News (1 September 2002) *Egyptians charged over feud deaths*)

In a paragraph headed "Family feud" this report states:

"Blood feuds and 'honour killings' are common in parts of the Arab world. Correspondents say this is particularly true in rural Upper Egypt, where communities adhere to strict rules that have been followed for centuries. The clash was the deadliest outbreak of clan violence since 1995, when 24 people were killed in a clash between rival families outside a mosque in Minya province. In March 1998, a man involved in the 1995 vendetta killed seven people and injured nine others from the rival family. Past feuds have also been linked to militant Islamic groups." (ibid)

An article from the Cairo-based newspaper *Al-Ahram* describes this event as follows:

"Walking through the narrow, unpaved alleyways of Beit Allam, a village 400 kilometres south of Cairo in the district of Gerga, Sohag governorate, it seems clear that life here will never be the same again. On Saturday 10 August, in broad daylight, more than a dozen gunmen ambushed two vehicles, murdering 22 members of the same family -- including a nine-year-old child -- in cold blood. The surprise attack was allegedly orchestrated by members of the Abdel- Halim family, their target a rival clan called El-Hanashat. The two families comprise the majority of the population of Beit Allam, although there are more El-Hanashats than Abdel- Halims. The blood feud between the two families began in 1990, sparked by a fight between children that ended with the murder of two members of El-Hanashat at the hands of the rival clan. Over a decade later, in April of this year, El-Hanashat reportedly got their revenge, killing a man named Hammam Abdel-Halim and injuring his son. That murder brought the tension between the two families back into the open again." (Al-Ahram Weekly Online (21 August 2002) *'Honour' drenched in blood*)

This article also states:

"Called 'Al-Tar', the vendetta is deeply rooted in southern Egyptian tradition, with some feuds -- often linked to disputes over money and land -- lasting for more than half a century. Vendettas are fairly frequent in Upper Egypt, but Saturday's massacre was the bloodiest since 1995, when 24 people were killed with gunfire and knives in a clash between two families outside a mosque in Al-Minya. In March 1998, a man involved in that 1995 vendetta, ended up killing seven people and injuring nine others from the rival family." (ibid)

An *Associated Press* report states:

"The theft of a few ears of corn was to blame for a massive family feud that killed five people in southern Egypt on Friday, police and the country's official news agency said. Clashes erupted in Minya province, 220 kilometers (135 miles) south of Cairo, after Wageh Abdel Sayed, a 58-year-old farmer, stole a few pieces of corn from his neighbor, Zein Karrasi, the news agency reported." (Associated Press (27 October 2006) *Police: 5 Egyptians killed, 13 injured in family feud over stolen corn*)

See also *Associated Press* report which states:

"Egyptian police says four farmers died in a five hour gun battle in southern Egypt between rival families over water rights. Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Sabir, security head of

Egypt's southern city of Assuit, says the battle took place early on Sunday between rival families over access to an irrigation canal passing between their cotton fields. Three other people were wounded. Both sides used automatic weapons, he added. A curfew has been imposed and the search is on for the men involved. Such incidents are not unusual in impoverished southern Egypt, which is dominated by heavily armed clans that often engage in vendettas." (Associated Press (7 September 2008) *4 dead in water dispute in southern Egypt*)

A *Daily News* article states:

"An Egyptian court on Monday sentenced five Muslims to life in prison for killing two Christian men in a family blood-feud in Upper Egypt, a judicial source said. The court in the southern city of Luxor found the men guilty of shooting two Coptic Christians in the town of Higaza last April in a feud between their two families that goes back to 2004." (Daily News Egypt (23 February 2010) *Egypt court jails five Muslims for life for killing Copts*)

A report from *The Egyptian Gazette* states:

"Three persons, including a 10-year-old schoolchild, from the same family were murdered in a south Egyptian village on Saturday night, police sources said on Sunday. The unidentified killer or killers shot dead them in dispute with their family and disappeared without anyone noticing them in the village of Bajeen on the outskirts of Sohag City, the police said. The victims were a factory worker, 40, and his 35-year-old brother and a 10-year-old boy named Hossam Abul Futtoh, the police said, adding that the motive for the murder appears to be revenge. All of the victims belong to one extended family." (The Egyptian Gazette (29 May 2011) *3 killed in Egypt Sohag vendetta*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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