



**1. Please identify any reports indicating that Christians from birth (not converts) have had difficulty in registering their religion as Christian on their National ID.**

No information was located stating that Christians from birth, who are not converts or the children of converts, had difficulty in registering their religion on their national identity card (ID). Christians from birth who became Muslim for a time and then sought to reconvert have experienced difficulties in registering their religion on their national ID. Additionally, Christians who were involuntarily “converted” to Islam, usually as a result of a father having converted to Islam, have experienced difficulties.

**2. Is there information suggesting that a person who altered IDs for people incorrectly registered as Muslims would attract adverse attention either from the authorities or Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood?**

Sources note that people who have altered IDs for Christians have attracted the attention of the Egyptian authorities and been charged under laws prohibiting the ‘falsification’ of documents. A government employee who provided a convert with a new ID was arrested in 2003. However, no information could be found specifying the punishment a government employee might face for altering IDs without official approval. Christian converts have been convicted for possessing modified IDs.

In 2007 the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report on the difficulties faced by certain groups, such as Baha’is and Christian converts, when registering their religion on their national IDs. According to the testimonies included in the report, some Christians have reportedly sought the assistance of civil service employees in order to change their IDs.<sup>1</sup>

A Christian convert stated that, in 2000, his priest introduced him and other converts to ‘government employees’ as people who lost their birth certificates and other papers, in return for bribes:

These were civil service employees, Muslim and Christian, who had access to computer entries. Then we went with our [new] birth certificates that said we were Christians and got IDs that said we were single Christians, even though [my wife] was pregnant. The ID change process is long and expensive. The main advantage is for the children. I still

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch & Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p.58 <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt1107webwcover.pdf>> Accessed 26 March 2012

face risk of arrest and three years in prison, but I have all my documents except military service.<sup>2</sup>

One testimony indicates that civil service employees that alter IDs might come to the attention of the authorities. A convert was reportedly detained in December 2003 after the government employee who provided him with a new ID had been arrested and had confessed. Authorities in Alexandria had earlier broken up a group of some 32 converts and suspects involved in providing false identification documents.<sup>3</sup> The report does not specify what happened to the government employee who provided the convert with the new ID. The convert was reportedly tortured before he fled Egypt in October 2004. A court convicted him in absentia of forgery and sentenced him to fifteen years in prison.<sup>4</sup>

Reports more broadly focus on the arrest and prosecution of converts. However, reports note that people assisting such persons have been detained and charged.

The 2010 US Department of State (US DOS) *International Religious Freedom Report* states that, in the absence of legal means to register their change in religious status, some converts resort to soliciting illicit identity papers. Authorities periodically detain and charge converts **and those assisting them** with violating laws that prohibit the falsification of documents.<sup>5</sup> US DOS states that some converts who procured counterfeit or „falsified‘ identification documents denoting their chosen religion, or helped others to do so, have been arrested, tried, and convicted for these crimes.<sup>6</sup> In October 2009, a criminal court convicted Einas Refaat Mohamed Hassan, a convert from Islam to Christianity, of forgery for possessing a forged national identity card which listed her religion as Christian. Hassan was released after serving a one-year prison sentence.<sup>7</sup> In 2008, airport security officials arrested a convert from Islam to Christianity, along with her husband and their two sons, while they were trying to board a flight to Russia. Officials charged her with carrying a false identification document. According to US DOS, two employees of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Alexandria were arrested on suspicion of providing her forged identity documents.<sup>8</sup>

Little information was found regarding whether a person who had altered the religious classification on national IDs would attract the adverse attention of Islamists. No reports were located of Islamists attacking or threatening people who have altered national IDs for people incorrectly registered as Muslims. However, if the people seeking to have their IDs altered were previously listed as Muslim, changing this religious classification from Islam to Christianity could potentially be considered contrary to Sharia laws regarding the repudiation of Islam. According to HRW, Sharia has been used to deny some people the right to change their religion from Islam on the IDs:

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<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch & Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p.58 <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt1107webwcover.pdf>> Accessed 26 March 2012

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch & Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November, p.58-9 <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt1107webwcover.pdf>> Accessed 26 March 2012

<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch & Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights 2007, *Prohibited Identities: State Interference with Religious Freedom*, November <<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/egypt1107webwcover.pdf>> Accessed 26 March 2012

<sup>5</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report July-December 2010: Egypt*, 13 September

<sup>6</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report July-December 2010: Egypt*, 13 September

<sup>7</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report July-December 2010: Egypt*, 13 September

<sup>8</sup> US Department of State 2011, *International Religious Freedom Report July-December 2010: Egypt*, 13 September

Interior Ministry officials cite the Islamic law prohibition against any “repudiation” of the faith as apostasy to refuse such requests [i.e. to change religion on IDs], even from Egyptians who were born Christian, converted to Islam, and want to convert back to Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Deleted.**

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<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch 2007, *Allow Citizens to List Actual Religion on ID Cards*, 12 November

## References

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