



سپین عاتق



حنان اصل

Abduction & Forced Islamization

Shah Taj, a fourteen-year-old Christian girl from Lahore, Pakistan, was on her way to school last year when a vehicle occupied by three men pulled up beside her. Grabbing her, they threw her in and sped off. As frightening as this may seem, the ordeal of the victim had just begun.

In her own words, here is how she described what happened: “I was standing at the bus stop waiting. Three Muslims named Talat, Mekael, and Faisal came up to me in a car. They were armed with deadly weapons. They pushed me into the car and took me to a hotel. While there, one of them, Mikael, raped me. Afterwards, at gunpoint they took my thumb impression and my signature, placing them on blank papers.

I tried to make noise; but they pointed their guns at me and threatened to kill my father and my younger brother if I make a noise.” Later on, Taj was forced to marry a Muslim man and required by law to convert to Islam. They had used her signature and thumbprint to create a document saying she had converted to Islam.

Like Shah Taj, Christian girls throughout the Islamic world are being abducted and trafficked for commercial, sexual exploitation. Others are coerced into domestic servitude. Equally shocking is that Muslim men are offered financial incentives when they marry a Christian girl—a technique



عشیر فریاض



دھیانا عکرم حنا



شہنا عالیہ حائل



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انجی عاطفہ کابل

designed by Islamic fundamentalists to convert young girls to Islam forcefully.

Investigations in Egypt have exposed the criminal phenomenon of forced Islamization of Christian girls, which is occurring on an alarming scale. On April

16, 2010, eighteen members of the United States Congress wrote to the State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Office, concerning the continued "reports of abductions, forced marriages, and exploitation of Coptic women and girls in Egypt."

The Egyptian government and state security have routinely denied the problem's existence, refusing to sanction cases that have been commissioned to court—a maneuver aimed at avoiding public attention.

ICC recently visited Egypt to investigate. Meeting with top human rights lawyers and activists who have defended Egypt's Christian minority, we have uncovered valuable sources and obtained names, birth certificates, and conducted personal interviews with the parents of



victimized Christian girls. Source after source exposed astonishingly similar cases, all of which told the same story:

Planned Seduction

Forced marriages are systematically orchestrated. A Muslim man or his accomplice exploits the girl's trust by convincing

her of the man's friendship. According to Bishop Thomas of the El-Quosia Diocese in Upper Egypt, these Muslims "are planning and organizing a plot to fool this person. It may seem like friendship or falling in love; but in actuality, it is a planned seduction."

Let's look at the case of "Hana" (Hana is a fictional name used to conceal the girl's identity). She was seventeen when Christina, a Muslim girl in her neighborhood, befriended her. Soon after, Hana was introduced to Amir, Christina's brother; and they began to court. One day, on the way home from shopping with Christina, Hana was drugged, beaten, and abducted. She awoke to find herself locked in Amir's house. Again drugged and convinced that she had shamed her family, Hana was forcefully converted to Islam and



forced to marry Amir. Her name was changed to Fatima. When she refused to have sex with her new husband, “the family held her down while he raped her.”

As in Hana’s case, most forced marriages are accompanied by physical abuse and violent sex. Ingy Adel was kidnapped at the age of twelve on her way to school. She said, “I was taken into a room by a man called Sultan, who tied my hands behind my back; and raped me.” Four others followed, each raping her. “I felt as each one of them raped me—that I was their enemy.” They beat her ferociously.

After fourteen-year-old Shah Taj escaped from the three men who abducted and raped her, a legal investigation discovered there was a marriage certificate and a document validating Taj’s conversion to Islam. In both

Pakistan and Egypt, once a marriage certificate is official, the girl’s complete identity is changed. She is given an Islamic name, and her Christian religious status is removed from her identification card. A bribe is offered and a deal is bartered between the abductor and the police officers, guaranteeing that the girl’s location and condition are permanently concealed.

Once the paperwork is finalized, it is as if the Christian girl never existed. The town she grew up in, the names of her parents, and the date she was born become mere memories, known only by those closest to her. All documents revealing the girl’s childhood or family history are burned or tucked away in bureaucratic files where there is no likelihood the girl’s whereabouts will ever be discovered. She becomes a ghost—with no past—only an uncertain future, lived-out as a resented wife to a detached husband.

The girl is then kept captive in her husband’s home. Commonly, the Muslim husband may take a second, third or fourth wife, using the “Christian” girl as nothing more than a household servant.

In Cairo, Mamdouh Nakhla, a Coptic lawyer and the Chairman

of the Al-Kalema Organization of Human Rights, said he has reported hundreds of cases of abduction to the police, and their response is always the same. “The police say the girl is happy with her marriage and happy to be a Muslim; and they demand that I stop looking for her. The police know where she is, but they choose not to tell me. There is an ‘unsaid contract’ between the police and the kidnappers.”

Then, Mr. Nakhla takes the case to the District Attorney, who orders the man and the girl to appear in court. However, the man is the lone representative to testify, having prevented the girl from attending the hearing. Before the judge, the man either denies the accusations, or professes that the girl willingly chose to marry him and that she is happy in her present circumstance. The District Attorney then refers back to the police, who verify the man’s statement. The police, honoring their agreement with the man, return with a positive report confirming the kidnapper’s testimony. With that, the District Attorney closes the case.

Since January 2006, there have been more than 2,000 documented cases of girls who have appealed to return to Christianity, but have been denied a hearing in Egyptian courts.

A Marginalized Minority

Christians throughout the Islamic world are unable to justly punish those who have violated their daughters by deliberate assaults, planned seductions, and kidnappings. Wagih Yacoub, a Coptic human rights activist, told ICC that in Egypt, the rights of Christians are not equal to those of Muslims. **“The only way you can protect yourself and protect your people is by the law; but if the law is not on your side, then you have no assurance of protection. We are the minority in this country. The Muslims have the support of the Egyptian government; they have the support of their religion; they have the support of the police security. The Christians cannot stand against an entire government.”**

In Egypt, Christians make-up roughly ten percent of the population, yet they remain third class citizens because of Islamic Shariah law. With little political power, the Christian community is left vulnerable to discrimination and oppression, incapable of defending themselves against even the most blatant fundamental human rights abuses.