

Week 4: Pray for Bishop Armia Boulous (Egypt)

Arrest and Background Christian Journalist Bishop Armia Boulous (31), a former Muslim, was arrested in December 2013 when documenting the persecution of Christians in Upper Egypt. In June 2014 he was sentenced to five years in prison for what the judge described as "disturbing the peace by broadcasting false information". He was also accused of spreading false news and rumours. Bishop's lawyer and human rights activists have stated that the government was targeting him and that at the time of his arrest an informant was following him.



Formerly known by the Muslim name Mohammed Hegazy, Bishop became a Christian in 1998. He was arrested several times and was tortured, but refused to recant his faith. Bishop is well known in Egypt as the first citizen to attempt to change the religious identity on his ID card from Muslim to Christian, in a case begun in 2007. Egyptian citizens aged 16 or older must carry an ID card, which is necessary to open a bank account, enrol children in school or start a business, among other activities. In January 2008, the Supreme Administrative Court ruled against Bishop. In 2009 a group of Islamists filed a charge of defaming Islam ("blasphemy") against him, based on the accusation that leaving Islam casts the religion into ill repute.

Bishop said he filed the case because he and his wife were expecting a child, whom they would be legally required to raise as a Muslim unless their conversion to Christianity was acknowledged in law. Both of them wanted their child to have a Christian name, receive a Christian education and be able to marry in a church. He said he also brought the case to establish a precedent for other converts.



Family Bishop and his wife Christine, also a former Muslim, were forced into hiding by death threats and attacks. Several sheikhs called for Bishop's execution, and the Minister for Religious Endowments publicly affirmed the legality of executing Muslims who converted to Christianity. As the blasphemy case continued, Bishop's home was set on fire, he was arrested and several times officials beat him in custody. His wife and two children have asylum in Europe, but Bishop stayed in Egypt, knowing that if he left he would never be allowed back.

Latest news On 28 December 2014 an appeals judge found Bishop not guilty on two charges: spreading information to "cause harm or damage to the public interest"; and spreading false news "bound to weaken Egypt's prestige" or harm the "country's national interests". However, he was found guilty of an unspecified charge (probably inciting sectarian strife) and sentenced to one year in prison. Bishop told his lawyer that officials in Cairo's Tora Prison have tortured him and denied him a Bible, and that he is being housed with violent criminals.

Prayer Points

1. Pray that Bishop will be kept safe in prison and will be well treated by guards.
2. Pray that he will be allowed to have a Bible in prison.
3. Pray that the Lord will encourage Christine as she looks after their two children.