

Egypt: Terrorist Bomb in Cairo's Christian cathedral Kills 25, 49 wounded

Source: [RT](#)

At least 25 people, mostly women and children, were killed, and 49 others injured in an explosion near Cairo's Coptic Christian Cathedral. No one has yet claimed responsibility for the blast – the deadliest attack on Egypt's religious minority in years.

At least six children were among the dead, Reuters reported, citing security sources.

The blast happened as Sunday Mass was about to end, AP reported, adding that this weekend it coincided with a national holiday marking the birth of Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

The explosive device contained at least 12 kilos (26 pounds) of TNT, Reuters reported.

The bomb was reportedly placed in a female handbag in a seat in the back of the church, and the explosion hit the section where female worshipers mainly stood, which is why the majority of the victims are women, Egyptian reporter for The Washington Post, Heba Farouk Mahfouz, posted on Twitter.

"I found bodies, many of them women, lying on the pews. It was a horrible scene," said cathedral worker Attiya Mahrous, as cited by AP.

The bomb exploded at a chapel that adjoins the main hall of St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, which is the largest Christian church in the Egyptian capital. The cathedral is the seat of

Egypt's Orthodox Christian Church and home to the office of its spiritual leader, Pope Tawadros II, AP reported citing Egypt's official MENA news agency.

Several hundred people reportedly gathered outside the cathedral after the attack, AP said. The protesters were chanting anti-government slogans and demanded the resignation of Egypt's interior minister. Riot police have been deployed to the scene.

A three-day mourning period has been announced in Egypt.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered condolences to his Egyptian counterpart, the Kremlin press service said. Remarking that the Sunday attack was "especially deplorable" as there were women and children among the victims, Putin added that the international community should stand together in its efforts to uproot terrorism.

The latest attack comes two days after two roadside bombs, one in Cairo and one to the north of the capital, left six police officers dead and six others injured.

The bombing is the latest attack against the Christian population in Egypt – 10 percent of the country's 90 million people.

In May, a mob of Muslims stripped naked and beat an elderly woman, and then paraded her through the streets of an Egyptian village, following rumors of a Christian man having an affair with a Muslim woman.

Over the past years, criminal gangs targeted well-off Christian families, kidnapping their children for ransom. Muslim men in Egypt are also known to have kidnapped young girls, forcefully converting them, and hiding them until they become adults.

If the Sinai crash was terrorism, its timing was perfect for the West

By Dan Glazebrook

Source: [RT](#)

A sketch by the late lamented US comedian Bill Hicks involved a US general at a press conference. “‘Iraq has incredible weapons. Incredible,’ the general said. ‘How do you know that?’ he was asked. “Oh, well, uh – we looked at the receipt.’”

In the aftermath of the Russian airplane crash in Egypt last week, Britain in particular has been quick to claim that the crash was the result of a “terrorist bomb,” presumably planted by Islamic State (previously ISIS/ISIL). So what is it that makes Cameron so sure that the terrorist group created by his Syria policy has the necessary training, equipment and wherewithal to carry out that attack? Did he look at the receipt?

What is clear is that if the plane was brought down by a bomb, and that bomb was planted by ISIS, it marks a major development for the group.

According to Raffaello Pantucci, of the Royal United Services Institute, an attack of this kind by ISIS would “*herald an unseen level of sophistication in their bomb-making, as well as the ability to smuggle a device on board.*”

But as well as a new technical feat, such an attack would represent an alarming change in tactics. The Times argued: “*If*

the plane crash did turn out to be the work of an Islamic State affiliate in Sinai, it would mark a significant departure for the jihadist group, which had yet to launch a large-scale attack against civilians."

So, if the plane was indeed brought down by an ISIS-in-Sinai bomb, either the group have suddenly been blessed with some amazing new technology, or they have suddenly decided to change tactics to mass killings of civilians. If the latter, isn't it a little odd that, after more than a year of Western airstrikes apparently targeting them, ISIS have failed to launch such an attack against Western civilians – yet are able to respond within weeks to a campaign of Russian airstrikes which, according to the West, are not even aimed at them?

Either way, the crash couldn't have been timed more perfectly from the point of view of Western geopolitics. After four years of setbacks, the West's Syrian "regime change" (that euphemism for wholesale state destruction) operation now faces the prospect of imminent total defeat courtesy of Russia's intervention. And options for how to salvage that operation are very limited indeed.

Full scale occupation is a non-starter; following Iraq and Afghanistan, both the US and British armies are now officially incapable of mounting such ventures. The Libya option – supporting death squads on the ground with NATO air cover – has always come up against Russian opposition, but has now been effectively rendered impossible. And relying on anti-government death squads alone is simply very unlikely to succeed, however many TOWs and manpads are feverishly thrown into the fire; after all, there are only so many terrorists and mercenaries who can be shipped in, and, as Mike Whitney put it, the world may have already reached "peak terrorist."

Forcing Russia out – and turning US and British airpower openly and decisively against the Syrian state – has thus become a key objective for Western planners. But how to do it?

What would turn Russians against the intervention? The Times wrote: "So far the war in Syria has been quite popular...[but] if it turns out that the war prompts terrorists to wreak vengeance on ordinary Russians by secreting explosives on planes, that gung-ho attitude could change." Or at least, that is presumably what the Times hopes.

And downing the plane on Egyptian soil just before Sisi's first state visit to Britain?

Egypt is at a historical crossroads. Having moved from the socialist camp into the West's "orbit" during the Sadat era in the 1970s, Egypt's leadership has become ever less willing to be dictated to by Washington and London: a process that began in the latter part of Mubarak's rule, and has continued under Sisi. Along with Russia, Egypt has played a leading "spoiler role," as Sukant Chandan puts it, in the West's regime change operation in Syria – and has not been forgiven for it.

In addition, Mubarak's government had been dragging its feet on the privatization and "structural adjustment" demanded by the IMF: and tourism was and is a major source of income helping to reduce the country's dependence on the international bankers. But since last Saturday, all that is now in the balance; as the Financial Times commented, suspicions that the crash was caused by a bomb "are likely to prove disastrous to the country's struggling tourism industry."

Britain's foreign secretary, Philip Hammond agreed. "Of course, this will have a huge negative impact on Egypt," he announced matter-of-factly, following Britain's decision to stop British flights to Egypt – seemingly without an ounce of regret. The likely massive loss of tourist income will force the Egyptians to go back to the IMF, who will, of course, demand their pound of flesh in the form of mass privatizations and "austerity."

But it is not only Egypt's economic dependency on the West that will be deepened by the crash – Britain, in particular, appears to be using the crash as leverage to re-insinuate itself into Egypt's military and security apparatus. Firstly, British officials have been taking every opportunity to humiliate Egypt, trying to convince the world that Egypt is perilously unstable, and that only by outsourcing security to the West can it be safe again. When Sisi arrived in the country this week, noted the Times, “Britain openly contradicted the Egyptian leader and suggested that he was not in full control of the Sinai peninsula,” whilst an Egyptian official “commented that the dispatch of six officials to check the security arrangements at Sharm el-Sheikh airport was ‘like treating us as children.’”

Finally, of course, the British government has not missed the opportunity to use the tragedy to push for deeper British involvement in Syria. Michael Fallon, Britain's Defence Secretary, has been spending the last two days explaining how the case for bombing Syria would be strengthened if it were proven the plane was brought down by ISIS. Quite how more deeply insinuating one of the death squads' leading state backers into Syria would somehow reduce the power of the death squads is, of course, not explained; such is the nature of imperialism.

In a world, then, where Western power is in steep decline, terrorism is fast becoming one of the last few viable options for extending its hegemony and undermining the rising power of the global South. If this attack does turn out to have been conducted by ISIS, how kind it will have been of them to take it upon themselves to act as the vanguard of Western imperial interests. And how obliging of the hundreds of Western agents in the organization not to do anything to stop them.

Dan Glazebrook is a freelance political writer who has written for RT, Counterpunch, Z magazine, the Morning Star, the Guardian, the New Statesman, the Independent and Middle East

Eye, amongst others. Dan is currently researching a book on US-British use of sectarian death squads against independent states and movements from Northern Ireland and Central America in the 1970s and 80s to the Middle East and Africa today.

[Amnesty International director alleged to have links to Muslim Brotherhood & radical Islamists](#)

Source: [RT](#)

A senior Amnesty International official has been found to have private links with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and revolutionary Islamists accused of plotting a coup in an Arab state.

Amnesty's director of faith and human rights, Yasmin Hussein, stayed overnight at the residence of a Muslim Brotherhood advisor during an official visit to Egypt in direct contravention of Amnesty guidelines.

Her husband was also named as an alleged Islamist in documents relating to a 2013 sedition trial in the United Arab Emirates.

Hussein, who was until recently the charity's director of international advocacy and among its leading voices at the UN, denies being an Islamist and has said she is "vehemently opposed" to raising money for "any organization that supports terrorism."

An investigation published by The Times claimed that Hussein, 51, held a private meeting with a Muslim Brotherhood government official during an Amnesty mission to Egypt in 2012.

After the private meeting with Adly al-Qazzaz, a ministerial education adviser, Hussein had dinner with his family and stayed overnight in their home.

Amnesty International was not informed of the visit, despite instructing its staff to declare any links that may generate a real or perceived conflict of interest with its independence and impartiality.

An Amnesty employee told The Times that the charity had strict rules on overseas trips, adding: "For an Amnesty delegate to accept an invitation to stay at the residence of a government official is a serious breach of protocol."

The Muslim Brotherhood is considered a terrorist organization in Bahrain, Russia, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The transnational Sunni Islamist organization has been illegal in Egypt since 2013, when the Muslim Brotherhood was overthrown by the military in a coup d'état which has since led to a violent crackdown on the group.

According to The Times, Adly al-Qazzaz's family was well connected within the party. His son, Khaled al-Qazzaz, was the Brotherhood's presidential secretary for foreign affairs. His daughter was the official spokeswoman for the group in the UK.

Both Adly al-Qazzaz and his son were arrested and detained following the military coup in 2013, but the father has since been released.

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Hussein said she did not know about the Muslim Brotherhood

positions held by members of the family and that she met with al-Qazzaz to speak about *"the synergies between human rights and educational planning."*

Amnesty said that, with the exception of the overnight stay, it *"found no evidence to suggest any inappropriate links between Ms Hussein and the al-Qazzaz family."*

In a separate incident, Hussein's husband was identified in documents released after a criminal trial of Islamists accused of plotting a coup in the United Arab Emirates.

Wael Musabbeh was one of several alleged British Islamists, none of whom were charged, named in documents relating to a 2013 trial that ended with the jailing of more than 60 Emirati citizens for conspiracy and sedition.

Amnesty, which challenged the fairness of the trial at the time, said it was unaware of the connection because it did not realize Musabbeh was Hussein's husband.

Musabbeh is also a director and trustee of Human Relief Foundation, a global Islamic charity banned in Israel for its alleged connecting to groups which finance Hamas.

The charity said Hussein denied being a supporter of the Brotherhood and has told Amnesty "any connections are purely circumstantial." It said it did not believe any of her alleged connections with Islamists represented a conflict of interest.

It added: "Amnesty International does, however, take very seriously any allegations that would call into question our impartiality and is therefore investigating the issues raised."

The charity has also come under fire for a separate incident in which an employee defended the organization's links with CAGE, an advocacy group which campaigns for victims of the "war on terror," but which has been accused of acting as

apologists for jihadists.
