

This Egyptian Muslim Woman Died Defending Christians On Palm Sunday

Brigadier General Nagwa El-Haggar is one of three female Muslim police officers who died in the attacks.

By Carol Kuruvilla, Rowaida Abdelaziz

A Muslim police officer who died in the line of duty during a terrorist attack on Coptic Christians in Egypt is being hailed as a hero.

At least 44 people died, and more than 100 were injured, [during bombings that targeted a Coptic cathedral and another Coptic church](#) on an important holy day on the Christian calendar, Palm Sunday. The Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the attacks.



ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES *Bombing site is seen after bomb attack near St. Marks Cathedral in the coastal city of Alexandria, Egypt on April 09, 2017.*

Brigadier General Nagwa El-Haggar was [one of at least seven Egyptian officers](#) killed on that day, [three of whom were Muslim women](#). She was [reportedly](#) posted at the entrance to St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria on Sunday,

where the Coptic Pope Tawadros was leading a Palm Sunday mass. The suicide bomber attempted to enter the cathedral through a main gate, but was stopped by security officers, according to the [state-owned news organization Ahram Online](#). The attacker then detonated the bomb outside the cathedral.

The [Saudi Arabian](#) news site [Arab News reports](#) that El-Haggar was conducting inspections on people entering the cathedral grounds when she saw her male colleagues struggling with the suspect. She was killed while rushing to help her colleagues.



STRINGER VIA GETTY IMAGES *Egyptians carry the coffin of policewoman Brigadier Nagwa el-Haggar during her funeral on April 10, 2017, after she died during a blast that struck outside the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate headquarters in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria on Palm Sunday the day before.*

Seventeen people died in the blast at St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, and 48 others were injured, according to [Reuters](#).

Hours earlier, another suicide bomber had managed to [slip past security at St. George's Church in Tanta](#). The attacker detonated a bomb at the altar, killing at least 27 people and injuring 78 others.

In addition to El-Haggar, two other female officers were killed in the attacks: Sergeants Asmaa Hussein and Omneya Roshdy, [according to Daily News Egypt](#). These three women [may be the first](#) female officers in Egypt's police force to be killed in the line of duty.



MOHAMED EL-SHAHED VIA GETTY IMAGES *Mourners pray next to coffins of the victims of the blast at the Coptic Christian Saint Mark's church in Alexandria the previous day during a funeral procession at the Monastery of Marmina in the city of Borg El-Arab, east of Alexandria on April 10, 2017.*

In an interview with [Dream TV host Wael Ibrashy](#), El-Haggar's nephew, Islam Fathi, said that his aunt was "known for her kindness."

"We are proud of General Nagwa," Fathi said.

Even though his aunt was Muslim, Fathi said she would sometimes say her prayers at the church.

"I say to our Coptic Christian brothers and sisters. Do not be sad," he said. "Muslims and Christians are one. It's not about Muslim attacking Christians. No.

My aunt was a Muslim. She was a believer ... She was protecting Christians who were also praying in the Church.”

In recent months, the Islamic State has [ramped up attacks on Coptic Christians](#) in Egypt. Christians make up [10 percent of Egypt's population](#). Sunday's attack have left some members of the community wondering whether Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has [done enough to protect them](#).

Al-Sisi has [declared a three-month state of emergency](#) for the country, and ordered troops to help police secure public spaces.