



The Maspero Massacre 10 YEARS ON

On October 9, 2011, thousands of peaceful protesters marched toward the Maspero building, the headquarters of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union, to demonstrate against the demolition of St. George Church in Edfu, Aswan. [Eyewitnesses](#) and [video footage](#) confirm that as the demonstrations proceeded, security forces fired tear gas and live ammunition at protesters and drove armored personnel carriers at high speeds into the crowd, running over demonstrators. Official state media incited against protesters on live television, and a state television anchor at the time called on “all honorable citizens” to take to the streets to defend the military from “Coptic attackers.”

As a result of indiscriminate state violence and incitement, 28 Egyptians were killed and hundreds were injured in what became known as the Maspero Massacre.

In the ten years since the Maspero Massacre:

Fact Finding

- On October 10, 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) ordered the cabinet to set up a [fact-finding committee](#) to investigate the Maspero Massacre. The full findings were never made public, but in media interviews, the committee shared its conclusion that a group of thugs allegedly infiltrated the demonstrations and spurred the chaos, attacking both protesters and the military.
- On October 10, 2011, the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) created a [fact-finding committee](#) on Maspero. [Its report](#), made public, found that 321 were injured and 28 were killed, at least 12 of whom were run over and crushed by military armored vehicles. The report placed blame on a number of parties, including Egyptian television, for inciting against Coptic protesters, but it was not conclusive on whether the military used live ammunition against protesters.
- On July 5, 2012, President Muhammad Morsi created a [fact-finding committee](#) on the killing, attempted killing, and injuring of peaceful protesters across the country between January 25, 2011 and June 30, 2012—a period of time that includes the Maspero Massacre. Although the committee engaged with the media to a limited extent, its findings were never made public.
- Years after the Maspero Massacre, the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), an Egyptian civil society organization, released the results of its independent research in [a report](#) documenting the events leading up to the incident, the massacre itself, and the state response.

Prosecutions

- Following the Maspero Massacre, an investigative judge conducted investigations into more than 30 civilians for inciting sectarian strife, disturbing public security, and attacking security forces. Most investigations were closed due to lack of evidence, but in April 2012, two Coptic men [were referred](#) to trial before a criminal court and ultimately sentenced in February 2013 to three years in prison for reportedly stealing weapons from the armed forces.

Continued on next page.

- On September 14, 2012, and following a trial before military court, three members of the armed forces [were found guilty](#) of “unintentionally killing” protesters during the Maspero Massacre after the court found “negligence and a lack of precaution while the men were driving military armored vehicles belonging to the armed forces.” Two of the men were sentenced to two years in prison, while the third was sentenced to three years in prison.

Accountability

- Despite [attempts](#) by families of the victims to submit complaints to the prosecutor-general requesting the referral of high-ranking military officials at the time of the Maspero Massacre—including Field Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi, Lieutenant General Sami Anan, Major General Hamdy Badeen, and Major General Ibrahim Damati—to criminal prosecution, these complaints were left unaddressed. [Attempts](#) to re-open investigations have been similarly unsuccessful.
- No high-ranking government, military, or police officials have ever been held accountable for the Maspero Massacre.

Memorialization and Erasure

- In a press conference after the Maspero Massacre, SCAF [described](#) the massacre as “clashes between Muslims and Christians,” ignored the media’s culpability in the events, denied that the soldiers were armed with live ammunition, and stated that the military does not believe in running over people.
- Immediately following and in the years since the Maspero Massacre, Egyptian and international civil society organizations mobilized [to call](#) for government action; [to document](#) the incident; and [to organize](#) in remembrance. Independent initiatives, including the [Maspero Testimonies](#) and the [858 Archive](#), have collected and preserved eyewitness accounts and video footage of the Maspero Massacre.
- Five years following the Maspero Massacre, Egypt’s Ministry of Interior [denied](#) activists a permit to commemorate the anniversary, citing “security reasons.”

Where we are today...

- Accountability for abuses faced by Egypt’s religious minorities, whether committed by state or non-state actors, remains tenuous today. Though some prosecutions took place following a series of 2013 church burnings and destructions, the vast majority of incidents targeting religious minorities remain [largely uninvestigated](#) or [fail to deliver](#) justice, including the events of the Maspero Massacre and the events leading up to it in the months prior. Officials often opt for [customary reconciliation councils](#) that fail to center the rights of victims and take place as a replacement for judicial proceedings.
- In September 2016, a Church Construction Law [was ratified](#) and passed into law. Though the legislation creates a much-anticipated process for church building, it does subject Christians to a separate and unequal legal process from the one stipulated for the construction of mosques. The process has also been criticized for lack of transparency and inefficiency; as of February 2021, less than 33 percent of building and renovation requests had received preliminary approval.
- At least two Coptic Christian advocates are in state custody today for their work documenting violations faced by religious minorities in Egypt. Human rights advocate and founder of the Maspero Youth Union [Ramy Kamel](#) has been in pretrial detention since November 2019; and researcher and academic [Patrick George Zaki](#) was referred to emergency state security court in September 2021 for an article he wrote titled: “Displacement, Killing & Harassment: A Week in the Diaries of Egypt’s Copts.”

