



**Prayer or politics?  
 US evangelist rallies  
 Christians in Boston**

**'DAY OF THE DISAPPEARED': SOUTH ASIA'S TORTUROUS WAIT FOR THE MISSING**

**FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT BEARING FRUIT**  
 99.3% OF EGYPTIAN WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONE FORM OF HARASSMENT

**CAIRO:** Eight years after the first woman in Egypt won a conviction against a man for sexual harassment, activists and lawyers see progress in transforming attitudes and more harassers being jailed. In 2008, Noha Elostaz broke social taboos by disclosing details of an assault as she pushed for her harasser's conviction. Sherif Gebreel had reached out from his vehicle, groped her, hit the accelerator and dragged her along. As she fell, she saw him laughing.

Her defiance, a landmark three-year sentence for Gebreel and years of campaigning by volunteers have now shifted the tide from the days when authorities and the public treated harassment as trivial, isolated incidents usually blamed on women. "Now I hear about so many cases, girls who take men to police stations, and people now have a sense of familiarity with this act," Elostaz, 34 said. "In daily life, things have improved. I can personally feel it on the street." According to a 2013 UN study, 99.3 percent of Egyptian women have experienced at least one form of harassment, and 82.6 percent said they did not feel safe in the street.

Public debate over the problem intensified in the aftermath of the January 2011 uprising against former president Hosni Mubarak. The protests centered around Cairo's Tahrir Square, where constant media coverage also highlighted sexual attacks and helped to uproot public denial of the phenomenon. "Of course there is progress," said Mozn Hassan, the executive director of

Nazra for Feminist Studies, a leading women's rights group.

**Sisi's 'message'**

Hassan said her organization has won more than 50 sexual harassment cases, mostly involving prison terms, since authorities directly criminalized sexual harassment in June 2014, days before President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's inauguration. One of the worst of these attacks happened in June 2014, during celebrations marking Sisi's inauguration. A widely shared video showed the bloodied naked body of a woman as a mob pulled and pushed her to the ground and policemen tried to rescue her. Shortly afterwards, Sisi visited her in hospital bearing flowers, apologized and vowed to crack down on harassment.

The following month, seven men were sentenced to life and two to 20 years over assaults around Tahrir. For Sisi to visit the victim "was a message to the state that this is no longer acceptable," Hassan said. Michael Raouf, a lawyer with the El Nadeem Centre for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, said he realized the impact of such rulings when he overheard young men commenting about the clothing of a nearby woman. "One was saying 'Look what she's wearing. Her brother or father let her leave the house looking like that, and if you say anything they put you in jail,'" Raouf recalled. From the very beginning, anti-harassment efforts sprang from the grassroots.

**Public debate**

The issue was brought to the fore-



**CAIRO:** Noha Elostaz, the first woman in Egypt to have won a conviction against a man for sexual harassment, speaks to journalists in her apartment in the Egyptian capital Cairo. — AFP

front of public debate in 2006, when throngs of men assaulted women in central Cairo during a public holiday. Newspapers ignored the incident, but bloggers reported it. Following the

2011 uprising, anti-harassment graffiti spread around downtown Cairo, volunteers organized to rescue women from mob attacks, and more women shared their own stories publicly. In February 2013, women took to the streets brandishing knives in a symbolic protest against sexual violence.

"Those who recall Noha's case, those who remember 2006 and people calling us crazy, those who recall 2013 with people saying 'No, these things do not happen in Tahrir', now there is a difference," said Hassan.

Even those who make excuses for harassers can change their minds when volunteers discuss it with them, said Alia Soliman, a spokeswoman for anti-harassment group HarassMap. "When we approach them little by little, with awareness they reconsider their convictions," said Soliman.

HarassMap organised talks at universities, trained Uber drivers and broadcast anti-harassment campaign advertisements on television and radio. But for 22-year-old Yosra Abdelaziz, the change is not coming

fast enough. She tried to report harassers but without success. Even at home, she says her older brother harasses her. "This thing with my brother, I used to tell no one. Now I tell everyone and write about it on Facebook," Abdelaziz said. She has now found some peace and let go of the guilt and shame, and is looking for her own apartment so she can lead an independent life. "Imagine if we weren't standing up to it, what the situation would be like," said Elostaz. "In the end, what's happening here is resistance." — AFP



**CAIRO:** Mozn Hassan, the executive director of a leading women's rights group Nazra for Feminist Studies, is filmed as she speaks to a journalist at her office in the Egyptian capital Cairo. — AFP

**NORTH KOREA REGIME EXECUTES VICE PREMIER FOR 'DISRESPECT'**

**SEOUL:** North Korea has executed a vice premier for showing disrespect during a meeting presided over by leader Kim Jong-Un, South Korea said yesterday, after reports that he fell asleep. The regime also banished two other senior officials, Seoul said, the latest in a slew of punishments Kim is believed to have ordered in what analysts say is an attempt to tighten his grip on power. "Vice premier for education Kim Yong-Jin was executed," Seoul's Unification Ministry spokesman Jeong Joon-Hee said at a regular briefing.

Kim was killed by a firing squad in July as "an anti-party, anti-revolutionary agitator," added an official at the ministry, who declined to be named. "Kim Yong-Jin was denounced for his bad sitting posture when he was sitting below the rostrum" during a session of North Korea's parliament, and then underwent an interrogation that revealed other "crimes", the official told reporters. The mass-selling JoongAng Ilbo reported on Tuesday that top regime figures had been punished, but identified the education official by a different name. "He incurred the wrath of Kim after he dozed off during a meeting presided over by Kim," it quoted a source as saying. "He was arrested on site and intensively questioned by the state security ministry."

**Fall of spymaster**

The unification ministry said two

other senior figures were forced to undergo re-education sessions. One of them was Kim Yong-Chol, a top official in charge of inter-Korean affairs and espionage activities against the South. The 71-year-old Kim is a career military intelligence official who is believed to be the mastermind behind the North's frequent cyberattacks on Seoul. Kim is also blamed by the South for the sinking of a South Korean warship in 2010 near the disputed sea border with the North in the Yellow Sea.

Kim was banished to a farm in July for a month for his "arrogance" and "abuse of power," the ministry official said. The spymaster, who was reinstated this month, is likely to be tempted to prove his loyalty by committing provocative acts against the South, the official said. "Therefore, we are keeping close tabs on the North," he said. Professor Yang Moo-Jin at the University of North Korean Studies said the vice premier's execution could be indirectly verified when Pyongyang's state media reveals the names of attendees at the government's anniversary ceremony on September 9. That confirmation will be important; Seoul in February said North Korean military chief of staff Ri Yong-Gil had been executed-only for Ri to turn up at a party rally in May.

**Uncle**

South Korea's Yonhap news agency put the number of party offi-

cially executed during Kim Jong-Un's rule at over 100. The most notorious case was that of Kim's uncle and one-time No 2 Jang Song-Thaek, who was executed for charges including treason and corruption in December 2013. In April 2015, it was reported that Kim had his defence minister Hyon Yong-Chol summarily executed with an anti-aircraft gun. Cheong Seong-Chang, a senior researcher at the private Sejong Institute, said the "reign of terror" that is characteristic of a Stalinist state showed no sign of abating under Kim. "But the intensity of the reign of terror depends on changes to the internal and external political environment", Cheong said. Reports of the latest execution coincide with a series of high-profile defections from the North.

North Korea's deputy ambassador to Britain sought refuge in the South with his family, the unification ministry said earlier this month. Thae Yong-Ho was driven by "disgust for the North Korean regime" and concerns for his family's future, it said. Twelve waitresses and their manager who had been working at a North Korea-themed restaurant in China also made headlines when they arrived in the South in April as the largest group defection for years. About 10 North Korean diplomats made it to the South in the first half of this year alone, Yonhap said, quoting informed sources. — AFP

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