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## Two sentenced to die over Egypt sectarian killing

Contributed by Cynthia Johnston  
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Rami atef Khilla

CAIRO (Reuters) - An Egyptian court sentenced two Christian men to death on Sunday for killing the Muslim husband of one of their female relatives who had converted to Islam against the wishes of her family, court sources said.

The brother and uncle of Mariam Atef Khilla were convicted of breaking into her Cairo home in 2008 and spraying gunfire on her family of three, killing her husband and hitting Khilla in her hand. The couple's baby daughter Nora was also wounded.

The death sentence will go to Egypt's state-appointed Grand Mufti for review, the sources said.

Khilla had converted to Islam three years earlier to marry her husband in defiance of her family, security sources said at the time. One source said the woman's brother had asked the couple to divorce so she could return to Christianity, but they had refused.

Christians account for up to 10 percent of Egypt's population and relations with the Muslim majority are usually harmonious. But disputes over land, religious buildings, inter-marriage and conversion sometimes lead to violence.

The killing came shortly after a Christian man was killed in sectarian clashes in central Egypt in which villagers fought each other with guns, bricks and sticks.

Egypt saw its worst Christian-Muslim clashes in decades in 1999 when 20 Christians were killed, 22 other people wounded and scores of shops destroyed in southern Egypt.

In 2006, a Muslim attacker stabbed a Coptic Christian man to death and wounded five others in the northern city of Alexandria, sparking clashes in which one Muslim was killed. Egypt says the attacker was mentally ill.