Persecution 27 November 2026 | English article

Egypt's Top Court Upholds 5-Year Hard Labour Sentence for Coptic Researcher Augustinos Samaan

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Egypt's Court of Cassation has rejected the final ordinary appeal of Coptic researcher Augustinos Samaan, leaving his five-year hard-labour sentence in force"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Egypt's Court of Cassation has rejected the final ordinary appeal of Coptic researcher Augustinos Samaan, leaving his five-year hard-labour sentence in force. The ruling came on Sunday 15 November 2026, and it means the ordinary courts have nothing left to offer a man who has already spent 422 days in detention for videos explaining his faith. His lawyers now plan to study the court's written reasons - the last thin thread in a case his family learned about only after it had already been decided.

Samaan is a Coptic comparative-religion researcher in his late thirties, with a doctorate and a YouTube channel that drew more than 100,000 subscribers. His videos explained the Christian faith and discussed the differences between Christianity and Islam - the kind of open, public conversation that his channel's audience had come to expect. Then, at dawn on 1 October 2025, masked security officers arrested him at his home.

At first he was accused of terrorism. That charge gave way to a different one: contempt of religion under Article 98(f) of Egypt's penal code, plus misuse of social media.

On 3 January 2026, the El-Basatin Misdemeanour Court sentenced him to five years with hard labour - the maximum sentence the blasphemy provision allows. A first appeal was rejected on 23 February 2026, and now the Court of Cassation has closed the door on the last ordinary appeal.

The cassation ruling, Appeal No. 12839 Of judicial year 96, found the appeal admissible in form but inadmissible on substantive grounds. In plain terms, the court accepted that the appeal was properly filed - and then refused to hear it on its merits. With that, the five-year sentence stands, and the ordinary judicial remedies are exhausted.

Augustinos Samaan Trial: Family Learned Of Conviction Days After It Happened

What troubles Samaan's lawyers most is not only the sentence but how the case was handled. His family and his lawyers were never told the date of his trial.

They arrived on 6 January for what they believed was a routine detention hearing - and learned he had already been convicted. The defence was also denied timely access to the case documents, and the official arrest report was dated a week after the family had reported his detention.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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