

# **SUMMONS BY THE POLICE**

# Summons by the Police

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**M**alika walked alone down the narrow, crowded streets of Cairo. The chatter of women and arguments of men, the shouts of little children, and the sounds of cars and radios filled the air, but she heard nothing except the voices arguing within her. Though the morning was unbearably hot, she was trembling in cold fear, trying to convince herself that what had happened the night before was but a dream. The feel of the summons from the Minister of Interior in her hand assured her that it was not. It stated that she would have to appear at the chief investigator's office before Lieutenant Mohammed Hassan at ten o'clock. Her Christian faith would be tested by fire, and in the process she could easily jeopardize the safety of other believers.

Malika, a baptized Christian, converted from Islam, was often invited to give her testimony in churches and home meetings. The night before, she was speaking to a large crowd gathered in a house when someone whispered in her ear, "There are three secret policemen waiting for you in the front room. I begged them not to interrupt the meeting." Malika continued her testimony of how she had been converted from Islam to Christianity, but word of the presence of the policemen spread among the people, creating confusion and anxiety. Some people wanted to form a barrier to keep the policemen away from her. After Malika calmed the people down, she found her way through the crowd and greeted the policemen warmly. They were surprised by her friendly behavior and, fearing a riot among the angry audience, merely handed her the summons and left.

The meeting continued for another hour in turmoil, as the people argued about what to do. When they had gone, Malika was left to make her decision alone. Lieutenant Hassan was known to be a zealous Muslim who cruelly persecuted Muslim converts and those who ministered to Muslims. Malika knew that as a Christian follower of the Way of Truth, she would have to answer his interrogation honestly regarding her Christian associates. But what would this do to those who had been involved in her conversion? There was the Anglican hospital, where the English missionaries had ministered to her during her illness, and where she had come to experience the love and healing power of Jesus in her life. It already had a reputation for converting Muslims and had come under severe attack from orthodox Muslim leaders and government officials alike. And there was Nadia, the

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Christian teacher who had befriended her and later taken her to an evangelistic meeting, where Malika opened her heart to Christ as her personal Redeemer and had become his disciple. It was Nadia who had given Malika her first Bible and taught her how to read it. And there was the evangelical church and the elderly Pastor Morkous, who risked his life and that of the church when he baptized Malika and several other converts. He had been questioned and his church closed down before. What would happen to all of them if she were forced by the officials to tell about her conversion?

For a moment Malika's thoughts turned to herself. Could her faith stand the fire of interrogation and persecution? She would be asked about her beliefs about Muhammed and the Koran. What would happen if she were to deny these and confess her faith in the Bible and the deity of Christ and his death and resurrection? Would she be imprisoned?

Malika knew that her father and older brothers, too, would be summoned. Had she not brought enough shame on them because of her conversion? They had tolerated her new faith so long as she kept it secret outside the family. But now she would have to face their anger, grief, and shame, because her faith would be announced officially and publicly. So far she had managed to keep her relationships with other Christians hidden from her family but now they would know who her friends were. What would her relatives do to them?

Malika thought also of those whom she had won for Christ in her meetings. Would they be offended at her cowardice if she went into hiding? And would not her testimony be ruined if she did not live up to her own preaching? The police would be looking for her, and word of their search would reach every church and every meeting. She would have to live a life of fear as the police pursued her. No church and no house meeting could ever invite her to speak again. Even her Christian sisters would be influenced by their parents and church leaders and told that it would be wise to avoid persecution by not seeing her again.

Much of the night she had struggled with these questions in prayer and in the study of her Bible, but no clear answer seemed to emerge. Now the hot sun and the noise of street life brought her mind back to the present. The hour had come for her to make her decision. She could not put it off any longer.