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Moroccan Christian jailed for evangelising

Mohamed el Baldi convicted for 'shaking the faith' of Muslims

WWM (09.09.2013) - A Moroccan Christian man has been jailed for two-and-a-half years and fined for evangelising.

Mohamed el Baldi, 34, from the town of Ain Aicha, near Fes, was ordered to pay 5000 dirhams (\$600) for "shaking the faith of a Muslim", at a court hearing on September 3.

He was arrested after his house was raided on August 28 and items linked to his faith such as his Bible were confiscated.

Propagating Christianity is prohibited under Article 220 of the Moroccan Penal Code. The law states that it is unlawful to stop one or more persons from practising their religion by force, violence or threats.

By law, the maximum punishment for this offence is three-to-six months' imprisonment and a fine of 200 to 500 dirhams. However, el Baldi has been punished much more strictly.

El Baldi, who is understood to have converted to Christianity around seven years ago, admitted friendship with two American Christians, who provided him with Christian materials, and confirmed that he attended Christian meetings in the cities of Meknes and Rabat.

During the court hearing, his mother was said to have been hysterical and to have asked Allah to exact revenge on whoever "tampered" with the mind of her son.

Morocco is ranked 39th in the Open Doors International's [World Watch List](#), which reports on countries where it is difficult to practise Christianity.

In 2010, a number of foreign Christians were declared as "a danger" to the country and [expelled](#).

Of the 33 million population of Morocco, over 99 per cent is Muslim. The rest is comprised predominantly of Christians and Jews.

Morocco death for apostates fatwa

News 24 (18.04.2013) - A fatwa published this week by Morocco's higher council of religious scholars (CSO) calling for the death penalty for Muslims who renounce their faith has sparked fierce controversy in the country.

The scholars, who represent official Islam in Morocco, said in their edict, published in Tuesday's edition of Arabic-language daily Akhbar al-Youm, that Muslims who reject their faith "should be condemned to death".

The fatwa, which has provoked strong reactions, dates back to April 2012 when a legal report was being prepared by the government, but it was not published at the time, according to local media.

Mahjoub El Hiba, a senior human rights official in the government, denied in a statement to the official MAP news agency having requested any such fatwa from the council of Islamic scholars, as Akhbar al-Youm had claimed.

"What was published in the document attributed to the CSO does not concern our government and commits us to nothing," Hiba told AFP.

"I am not authorised to request advice or fatwas from the CSO. I do not have to comment on what a constitutional body like this does," he added.

The CSO is the only institution entitled to issue fatwas in Morocco.

The ministry of Islamic affairs declined to comment on the issue.

Morocco's penal code does not explicitly prohibit apostasy, which is illegal in most Muslim countries, and punishable by death in some states such as Saudi Arabia, although in practice people are rarely executed for renouncing their faith.

But Moroccan law states that "anyone attempting to undermine the faith of a Muslim or convert him to another religion" risks six months to three years in prison.
