

# Egypt: Militant group in Gaza behind church attack

Ministry of the Interior added Mohammad Lutfi Ibrahim, 26, had admitted to having been recruited by the Palestinian Islamic Army

- By Ramadan Al Sherbini, Correspondent
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Cairo: Egyptian authorities Sunday night said they had arrested a radical Egyptian, who masterminded a deadly bombing outside the coastal city of Alexandria on the New Year Eve.

The Ministry of the Interior added in a statement that Mohammad Lutfi Ibrahim, 26, had admitted to having been recruited by the Palestinian Islamic Army, an Al Qaida-linked group in the Gaza Strip, to identify Christian and Jewish places of worship to be attacked.

According to the statement, Ibrahim had infiltrated into Gaza to 2008 when he met members of the radical group who had allegedly convinced him that attacking Christian and Jewish places of worship is part of Jihad or holy war in Islam.

The statement added that Ibrahim, a native of Alexandria, had identified two churches and a synagogue in the city as potential targets for the Palestinian Islamic Army with whom he maintained contacts through the Internet. He had allegedly provided accommodation for the attackers of the Two Saints Church in Alexandria, but left the city to undergo ear surgery before the bombing took place.

Earlier on Sunday, Egyptian Mminister of Interior Habib Al Adly accused the radical Gaza group of the attack on the church, which left 23 people dead and dozens injured.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, now in Cairo, told Egyptian editors Sunday night if the Palestinian Army were involved in "this henious act", they should be punished.