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## **EGYPT | Christian Woman's Criminal Case Delayed**

The criminal court in Minya has refused to rule in the case of Suad Thabet for the second time this week, sending it back to the appeal court in Beni Suef on Aug. 26.

Thabet, 72, was attacked, beaten, and stripped in public by a mob on May 20, 2016 after her son was accused of having a relationship with a divorced Muslim woman. He was sentenced to two years in prison on July 27, 2017, which he served.

Initial reports indicated that seven houses were completely burned down during the attack on Thabet, but subsequent reports have confirmed that five were destroyed. Three men were charged with disturbing public peace, inciting violence and stripping Thabet in public. They were each sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison by the criminal court in Beni Suef, but they appealed the verdict.

After years of negotiations and “reconciliation sessions,” victims who lost their homes reconciled with the accused on Feb. 10, apart from Thabet and her husband.

Thabet’s case was heard by the criminal court in Minya on Aug. 24 and 26 but refused to rule on the issue and sent it back to the appeal court in Beni Suef on both occasions.

CSW sources believe this decision is an attempt to delay the final verdict. In March 2019, the same court refused to issue a ruling in two other cases involving crimes targeting Coptic Christians; firstly, the destruction of homes belonging to Christians in the village of Al-Karm, and secondly, the murder of Eskandar Tuss and burning of Christian homes in the village of Delga in 2013.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “CSW is deeply disappointed by the repeated delays in this trial. Although President Sisi offered his personal empathy and apologies to Mrs. Thabet following the incident, the perpetrators of this disgraceful attack are still free two years later, while Mrs. Thabet’s son was promptly tried and has already completed his sentence. We call upon the Egyptian authorities to urgently address all instances of discrimination against Christians and other religious minorities,

and to fulfil the country's constitutional and international obligations to treat citizens equally before the law, regardless of their religious affiliations. CSW also encourages the Egyptian government to provide training in religious diversity to the judiciary, the police force, and to local government officials as part of its counter-extremism strategy.”