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**Militants claim responsibility for Egyptian temple massacre**

LUXOR, Egypt (AP) — Militants blamed for most of the violence in Egypt's five-year Islamic rebellion claimed responsibility Tuesday for the revolt's deadliest attack: the massacre of 62 people at an ancient temple crowded with tourists.

The al-Gamaa al-Islamiya, or the Islamic Group, said in a faxed statement that Monday's attack was a failed attempt to take hostages to trade for the freedom of their spiritual leader, a blind Egyptian cleric jailed in the United States for plotting to bomb New York landmarks.

The sandstone terraces of the Temple of Hatshepsut were bloodstained Tuesday, but dozens of tourists warily returned. Many others were fleeing the country, however, and agencies were scrapping tours — spelling trouble for Egypt's important tourism industry.

President Hosni Mubarak visited the temple on the Nile River's West Bank, across from

Luxor, to reassure tourists, and replaced his interior minister, blaming him for lax security.

Thirty-one of the dead were Swiss, police said. The others included eight Japanese, five Germans, four Britons — including a child — a Bulgarian, a Colombian and a French citizen. Seven of the dead were still unidentified. There were 24 people wounded.

Police shot the six attackers as they tried to escape. Authorities said one was a member of al-Gamaa, the group that claimed responsibility for the attack.

Al-Gamaa has been a main target of police battling a violent campaign aimed at overthrowing Mubarak's secular government and turning Egypt into a strict Islamic state.

The government has arrested and jailed thousands of suspected radicals, put hundreds on trial and executed 63 people in the past five years. But al-Gamaa and similar radical groups are difficult to fight because of

their small, loosely connected cells.

Last year, al-Gamaa took responsibility for killing 16 Greek tourists at a hotel near the pyramids, on the edge of Cairo. The group also claimed an assassination attempt on Mubarak while he was visiting Ethiopia in June 1995; he was unharmed.

In its statement Tuesday, the group said the gunmen's "brave" hostage attempt went awry because police opened fire too quickly, forcing militants to return fire. It accused police of showing negligence toward the safety of tourists.

"The government forces dealt lightly with the lives of the tourists and the citizens, leading to the falling of this great number of dead," it said.

Witnesses, however, said the six gunmen opened fire as soon as they entered the temple grounds, spraying wildly with automatic weapons and killing 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians.

**Militants responsible for Luxor attack**

The Islamic Group has claimed responsibility for Monday's foreign tourist massacre near Luxor, Egypt, saying it wanted to secure the release of its spiritual leader who is jailed in the United States.



**Islamic Group**  
a.k.a.: al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya

- Formed in the late 1970s
- Threatened the life of President Clinton if their spiritual leader, Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, dies while serving time in federal prison.
- Waged a campaign of violence to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's Egyptian government and install an Islamic state.
- Targeted Coptic Christians, foreign tourists, journalists and Western interests.



Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman



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Year	Date	Location	Victims
1992	Oct. 21	Dairut	British nurse dies in bus attack.
1993	Feb. 26	Cairo	Bomb in coffee shop kills 3 Swedes, Turk and Egyptian; 19 injured including 2 Americans.
1994	March 4	Abu Tig	Machine-gun fire on Nile cruise ship fatally wounds German woman.
1994	Aug. 26	Hag Hammadi	13-year-old Spanish boy injured; 3 injured in tour bus attack.
1994	Oct. 23	Naqada	British man killed; 3 British injured in attack on van.
1995	Sept. 27	Hurgada	German tourist, 2 Egyptians killed; 2 Germans injured in gunfire in Red Sea resort city; 1 later dies.
1995	April 18	El Gasa	16 Greek tourists killed; 10 injured when gunman opens fire at Europa Hotel near pyramids.
1995	Nov. 17	Luxor	Gunfire on tourists kills, among them Germans, Swiss, Japanese, Egyptian and Britons.

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