



PHOTO: BBC ONLINE

An image grab taken from a video made available by a Jihadist media outlet on July 4, 2015, allegedly shows 25 Syrian government soldiers before being executed at the ancient amphitheatre in the city of Palmyra.

# IS video 'shows murder of soldiers in Palmyra'

*Killings took place at an amphitheatre*

BBC ONLINE

A video apparently released by the Islamic State group shows 25 men being shot dead in the ancient city of Palmyra, in Syria.

IS said the men were soldiers captured in the city of Homs. They were shot dead inside Palmyra's amphitheatre.

Stills from the video showed the killers to be young males, possibly even as young as 13 or 14.

IS captured the site and the neighbouring city of Palmyra in late May.

The video was distributed by accounts known to be linked with Islamic State militants. It is not clear when it was filmed.

The killings took place on a stage at the front of the amphitheatre before a large black IS flag.

Several hundred men in civilian

clothes are filmed sitting on steps watching the shootings. Among them was a young boy.

In close-up shots of the men waiting to be killed, they appear to have been beaten on the face.

Days after IS claimed Palmyra, it executed 20 men in the same amphitheatre.

At the time, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said residents near the site were rounded up and forced to watch the killings.

In May, Mamoun Abdelkarim, Syria's head of antiquities, said: "Using the Roman theatre to execute people proves that these people are against humanity."

Abdulkarim said most of the museum's antiquities had been transferred to Damascus before IS approached the city.

Since then, there have been reports

that mines have been planted among some of Palmyra's ruins, and there were claims this week that militants destroyed an ancient sculpture outside Palmyra's museum.

Since capturing the city, IS has also taken control of a military airbase and a notorious prison nearby.

The ancient ruins are situated in a strategically important area on the road between the capital, Damascus, and the contested eastern city of Deir al-Zour.

Fighters with IS started claiming vast swathes of Syria and Iraq in 2014, aided in part by the insecurity generated by Syria's civil war.

More than 230,000 Syrians have died in the war, which began after President Bashar al-Assad's forces tried to put down anti-government protests in March 2011.

## Police

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to buses; they admitted it themselves. Why are they not being brought to justice?"

Alleging that the government was trying to control the judiciary, Khaleda said, "Due to the interference by the executive ... independence of the judiciary is being hindered."

"The judiciary has been separated, but it hasn't become independent. The independence of the judiciary has been snatched. In fact, it's now more controlled," UNB quoted her as saying.

"From the Supreme Court premises, I want to say there's no rule of law. The law is not equal for all. We see the trial is not the same for the ruling party men and the opposition and common people. It can't be allowed to continue," Khaleda told the lawyers.

She said ruling party men were not being arrested and punished even after committing serious crimes, while the opposition men were sent to jail and punished for committing no crime.

"Those who had once killed and made to disappear 20,000-30,000 people have now become very good men."

Khaleda alleged that the government had re-empowered parliament to remove judges through the 16th amendment to the constitution to establish its control over the judiciary. "Now there's no justice as the judges are controlled."

## Rab rescues

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Lalbagh camp yesterday.

On Thursday, Imran Hossain, 18, son of Aslam of Bangshal, was picked up from in front of his house on Aga Sadek Road.

Later, the criminals called Imran's relatives over the phone and demanded Tk 3 crore from them as ransom, Alam said.

Rab-10 was informed about the matter afterwards.

On information, a team of the crime busters raided several places of Keraniganj, on the outskirts of the capital, and detained Sayeed Hossain Rony, suspecting his links with the crime.

Based on Rony's statement, the seven others were held from several places of Bangshal on Friday night, added the Rab official.

The seven are Imran Hossain, Nurul Islam alias Robin, Abdur Rahim alias Sabuj, Jewel Mia, Golam Hossain alias Rakib, Tanjid Shikdar alias Pranta, and Bappi.

As per the confession of Rony and Robin, who were nabbed before others, the Rab team rescued Imran from the ground floor of an under-construction building at Bangshal, the Rab official said, adding the boy was in a good health.

A case was filed with Bangshal Police Station.

## 12 'safer'

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The other missing members of the family are the couple's daughter, Rajia Khanom, 21, and sons Mohammed Zayd Hussain, 25, Mohammed Toufique Hussain, 19, Mohammed Abil Kashem Saker, 31, and his wife Sheida Khanam, 27, and Mohammed Saleh Hussain, 26, and his wife Roshanara Begum, 24, along with three children, aged between one and 11.

The Mannans have the distinction of including the oldest and youngest British people to have defected to the so-called Islamic State.

Rajia Khanom, 21, was stopped at the airport by police on the day before the family was eventually allowed to fly, it emerged this week.

Meanwhile, it has emerged that two sisters from another Luton family were prevented from flying to Bangladesh by counter-terror police shortly before the family of 12 went missing.

Officers seized the passport of one of the sisters, who is in her 20s and is said to be linked to the banned radical group Al-Muhajiroun, reports BBC.

They allowed the second sister to fly out to Bangladesh to join her family two or three days after the stop, between late March and early April.

Separately, two of three east London teenagers, who fled to Syria to join IS, have married militants, a lawyer for their relatives said yesterday.

Bethnal Green Academy pupils, Shamima Begum, 15, Kadiza Sultana, 16, and Amira Abase, 15, fled Britain in February to join the militant group.

Hundreds of Britons have travelled to support or fight for jihadist organisations in Syria or Iraq. Last month three sisters reportedly took their nine children to Syria.

The Islamic State group has seized large swathes of Iraq and Syria since last June, becoming notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings.

On June 29 last year, it announced the formation of a caliphate -- a state governed in accordance with Islamic law or Sharia, by God's deputy on Earth, or caliph.

## Split Greece teeters

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paying workers in IOUs valid in local supermarkets.

"No-one accepts your credit cards. Most people are buying food now because they fear the worst," said Andreas Koutras, a 51-year old who works in finance.

'MALICIOUS RUMOUR'

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras got a rock-star welcome at an Athens rally late Friday as he sought to revive support for the 'No' vote in a referendum called to strengthen his hand in talks with international creditors.

EU leaders have warned that a 'No' victory could cause Greece to crash out of the eurozone. But Tsipras and his closest ally Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis have accused them of fear-mongering.

In an interview published Saturday the outspoken Varoufakis accused Athens's creditors of "terrorism".

"What they're doing with Greece has a name -- terrorism," he told the Spanish El Mundo daily. "What Brussels and the troika want today is for the 'Yes' (vote) to win so they could humiliate the Greeks."

As tensions rose he was forced to deny a Financial Times report that suggested Greek savers could lose 30 percent of their bank deposits to shore up the banking system, slamming it a "malicious rumour".

The British business daily, quoting unidentified bankers and businessmen close to negotiations, reported that Greek depositors with over 8,000 euros (\$8,900) in an account may be forced to take a "haircut".

A defiant Tsipras told 25,000 cheering supporters at Friday's rally to "say 'No' to ultimatums and to turn your back on those who would terrorise you," adding: "No one can ignore this passion and optimism."

A rival rally of 22,000 "Yes" supporters shouted pro-European slogans and voiced fears of a so-called "Grexit" from the eurozone and a return to Greece's former currency, the drachma, if Tsipras got his way.

"They cannot pretend any longer that it's not about leaving the euro," said a 43-year-old doctor who gave his first name as Nikos. "Outside the euro lies only misery."

Many Greeks have crossed over to the "Yes" camp since capital controls were imposed this week limiting daily ATM withdrawals to just 60 euros (\$67) in order to stem a cash haemorrhage after Greece's international aid package ran out on Tuesday.

Adding to the sense of crisis, a eurozone emergency fund officially declared Greece to be in default on Friday for not making a 1.5-billion-euro payment to the International Monetary Fund this week.

The latest voter intention polls, published late Friday, showed the nation of 11 million people was evenly divided.

A GPO poll put the 'Yes' voters at 44.1 percent and the 'Nos' at 43.7 percent, while an Alco survey found 44.5 percent would vote 'Yes' while 43.9 percent would vote 'No'.

'WILD REVENGE INTENTIONS'

Tsipras says the vote is needed to force creditors to finally accept his key demand of another round of debt relief to save Greece from financial meltdown and possibly crashing out of the euro.

But critics have complained the referendum's very technical bailout question is unintelligible, and that the bailout deal it asks voters to weigh expired on Tuesday.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker warned in Brussels that Greece's negotiating position would be "dramatically weakened" in the event of a "No" -- and still difficult even in the event of a "Yes" vote.

As the clock ticked down there was palpable exasperation among Greece's eurozone partners, at least one of whom branded the government as "amateurs" asking for a blank cheque.

The pitiful state of the country's banking sector was being blamed on Greeks who, gripped by panic, moved money to bank accounts in France and Germany or are stashing cash at home.

European leaders fear the referendum will not only seal Greece's fate; Eurosceptic parties at the extreme left and right of the political spectrum have been exploiting the Greek referendum to bash the euro currency.

Tsipras insists Greece needs to trim its suffocating 323-billion-euro debt burden by having creditors forgive 30 percent of what they are owed and allowing a 20-year grace period for repaying the rest.

Varoufakis has promised banks would reopen on Tuesday if a new deal is agreed quickly, and the Union of Greek Banks said Friday its members had enough liquidity until then.

In a op-ed in Greece's Kathimerini newspaper the minister warned a 'Yes' vote would transform the country into a "colony regime subject to debt", with creditors "returning to Athens with wild revenge intentions".

HOARDING ESSENTIALS

Greeks were hoarding cash and food yesterday amid mounting fears the economy could collapse, cracking open their wallets only to stock up on essentials and stripping supermarket shelves in the process.

Mothers, elderly men and university students were spotted pushing heavily overloaded trolleys or coming out of shops weighed down by bags of food, with essentials such as sugar, flour and pasta top of the list.

In the well-off area of Glyfada in Athens residents appeared to have panicked, thrusting everything from vast rolls of toilet paper to multiple packs of lentils into their carts.

"Most people are buying food now because they fear the worst," said Andreas Koutras, a 51-year old who works in finance, referring to a referendum Sunday on Greece's bailout which could seal its financial fate.

Reports that medicines were also flying off the shelves were supported by pharmacist Yannis Triantaphilou.

Priorities were "food and medicines" and he had seen "an increase of customers in the pharmacy".

## Nun brings life in DR Congo

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still the colonial power in the Congo, the Catholic nun unpacked her bags in the northern province of Equateur in 1959 just a year before independence.

Fluent in Lingala, the most widely spoken local language, she cannot recall all major events but remembers the mid-1970s when the regime of dictator Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-1997) became overtly hostile to the Catholic church.

'THEY DESTROYED EVERYTHING' Mobutu campaigned for "authenticity" to rid the nation of colonial vestiges and to "Africanise" its institutions. The policy led to widespread sacking of church property, which was likened to undesirable imports from the West.

"They took away all the Christian statues in the mission" and forbade parents from giving their babies Christian names, Sister Maria said.

Another strong memory was the arrival of rebels led by Laurent-Desire Kabila, whose Rwandan-backed Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation brought Mobutu down at the end of the First Congo War (1996-1997).

"At our mission, they came in and stole everything. With two other sis-

ters, I took sick people to the maternity clinic, believing that they would respect the place. But they destroyed everything and locked me in a room with a three-month-old orphan."

One soldier saved her from another who wanted to kill her. "He said to him, 'You have to leave her. She is the one who helps our women give birth'."

After that incident, the nun crossed the Oubangui river to take refuge for a month in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, on the opposite bank -- but she eventually came back.

During the Second Congo War of 1998-2003, which drew in more than half a dozen foreign armies after Kabila fell out with Rwanda, the mission was left in peace by local rebel forces behind Jean-Pierre Bemba, who held sway in the territory.

Later named a vice-president, Bemba today is on trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for crimes his troops are accused of carrying out in CAR in 2002 after its then president Ange-Felix Patasse asked Bemba for help in putting down a rebellion.

'I SHALL GIVE MY BONES'

During that violence, Sister Maria's mission became a haven of peace and

assistance for many Central Africans who fled into DR Congo to escape the killing, raping and looting.

In March 2013, the former armed forces chief who topped Patasse a decade earlier, CAR president Francois Bozize, was himself ousted by mainly Muslim rebels of the Seleka alliance.

A flood of refugees again poured into northern DR Congo when atrocities by Seleka fighters provoked the emergence of largely Christian vigilante forces who exacted vengeance on civilians of the Muslim minority.

Again, the Daughters of Saint Joseph cared for wounded refugees, preaching brotherhood and refusing to give in to patients who did not want to share a room with someone of a different faith.

Tension remains high in the DR Congo amid suspicions that President Joseph Kabila, who took office in wartime in 2001, is manoeuvring to stay in power beyond his constitutional term, which ends in November 2016.

If there is fresh crisis, the elderly nun has no plans to flee.

"I want to stay here. I don't want to be a deserter. I've given my whole life here and I shall also give my bones."

## Masdar judgment

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the Masdar Hossain case.

In 1999, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgment in the case, laying out a roadmap to separate the judiciary from the executive.

After a lapse of several years the judiciary finally came out of the control of the executive on November 1, 2007 under the caretaker government.

But following protest from the admin officials who had lost their judicial powers due to the separation, the caretaker government had relented by empowering the executive magistrates to run mobile courts.

The finance minister's suggestion came hard on the heels of a June 22 cabinet nod to a proposal seeking more power to the executive magistrates.

In his speech, Muhith referred to US president Franklin D Roosevelt who, following the economic depression in the 1930s, undertook some extremely different measures and introduced new rules.

He said the US courts opposed the measures and the new rules but Roosevelt, who had popular support, "threatened the court that he would pack it."

The courts then took note and made a compromise, said Muhith.

"And thereafter we see that the court system and the executive have found their proper places," he added.

"I am telling the story because we

are also a new nation and we have also to set our traditions and we have also to come to a place where balance is struck ... in the management of important institutions of the society," Muhith said.

However, Law Minister Anisul Huq, who was also present there, refused to make any comment on this.

"It is his [Muhith's] statement. I will not make any comment on this issue," he told The Daily Star.

Tania Amir, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court and a lawyer of Masdar Hossain and others in the case, said, "There is no scope or opportunity to review the [Masdar Hossain] judgment, as review has already been done in 2000."

But Tania Amir said Bangladesh is about to enter a new phase of development through its journey towards a middle-income country and the most fundamental pre-requisite for achieving that status is the rule of law based on the legal infrastructure, upon which the physical infrastructure and foreign investment are predicated.

Therefore, the rule of law and the legal compliance culture is in consonance with any form of sustainable development, she stressed.

"Good governance includes not only just political governance but also corporate governance and good governance within the judiciary and the law and order machinery. Therefore, mas-

sive investment is required to reform the judiciary and the law enforcement machinery as per the mandate of the Masdar Hossain judgment and not by defying it," Tania said.

The chief justice in his speech did not say anything about Muhit's suggestion.

He said like any other public institution, the judiciary can be subjected to fair criticism, if and when the occasion demands.

"But if the criticism is illegitimate and irresponsible, it may do immeasurable harm to the institution of the judiciary," he said.

He said when the backlog of cases is high and case flows are unpredictable, it is the poor, marginal and vulnerable section of the society that suffers the most.

"We, therefore, need to take urgent ... steps towards reducing case backlogs," he added.

The Chief Justice emphasised the use of information and communication technologies in the judiciary.

Bangladesh Supreme Court and the UNDP jointly organised the workshop at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Law Minister Anisul Huq, State Minister for Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology Zunaïd Ahmed Palak, principal secretary of Prime Minister's Office Abul Kalam Azad, among others, spoke at the programme.