

IDENTITY CRISIS

Set in Egypt, and based on true stories.

Seeks to illustrate the problems caused by Identity Cards that state a person's religion and for which there is no process to change the registration to reflect one's chosen belief.

Four characters:

Andrew ordained minister in Egyptian Church

Fatima/Martha a lady who chose to follow Jesus

Fouad Fatima/Martha's fiancée, from a Christian background

Edmond an assistant to Andrew

[The gender of Edmond could be changed to suit cast available]

Note that it will sound more Egyptian if the long words have all syllables spoken distinctly, e.g. imag-in-ative-ly; legal-ly

Andrew and Edmond are discussing a church matter when Fouad and Fatima enter.

Andrew Fouad! Fatima! Welcome; good to see you

Fouad It is good to see you, too, Andrew. How is the family?

Andrew Really well, thank you. You both know my assistant, Edmond, of course.

Fouad Indeed. Hello, Edmond.

[More introductions, handshakes all round]

Andrew So, what is this matter that you wish to discuss with me?

Fouad Well, the reason I ..er, I mean we wanted to see you is because I have asked Fatima to marry me..

Fatima And I have accepted.

Andrew Congratulations!

Fouad And we need to talk with you about how to go about this.

Edmond But you can't! *[Others look at him surprised]* I mean, Fatima, aren't you a registered Moslem?

Fatima Err yes.

Edmond And you know that you cannot legally change that... and that it is against the law for a Moslem woman to marry a Christian man. Surely you know all that?

Fouad Well, yes, but it is a totally unjust law – and we believe there might be a way around it.

Edmond Like go to the US or UK or ...?

Fatima No not that, we are Egyptian, we want to remain here and live normally.

Edmond Huh, what does “normal” mean for someone who follows Jesus from your background?

Andrew *[Trying to calm things]* Edmond, let’s just talk about this.
[Turning to Fouad and Fatima] Fouad, I agree the law is totally unjust and we need to be imaginative. And Fatima, I have been impressed by how you have learnt to live as a follower of Jesus. You’ve been regularly to your discipleship classes, and you’ve shown sensible discretion. By the way, does your family know about your faith?

Fatima No, but they are commenting on the changes in me, and I think they are becoming suspicious. I’m not sure how they will react when they finally realise.
This is one reason why I am keen to leave home.

Andrew I can see that.
And Fouad I am also impressed by how you have handled your relationship with Fatima. So now, we must think about your marriage. From my point of view, there is no problem. You clearly love each other. You are both single and there is no reason before God that you cannot and should not be married. You have my support.
But Edmond is right that the state does not permit it. You have different religions registered on your Identity Cards, ...

Edmond *[Interrupting]* And people are not allowed to marry outside their faith. The only process for change is **to** Islam, but there is none **from** Islam.

Andrew All this does cause us a big problem.

Fouad We are fully aware of this. But, I have heard of similar cases where Moslem girls like Fatima have acquired identity cards stating that they are Christian.

Edmond Totally illegal, fraudulent, and gets people arrested and imprisoned ...

Fouad But it would allow us to marry; although it does mean Fatima would have to change her name.

Edmond ... and we know what happens to those arrested in this country; doubly so if they are Christians! Look at those six brothers from Port Said - imprisoned over some minor incident with their café; one of them got a fractured skull!

Fouad *[hurrying on]* When I was growing up, there was this family in the church whose daughter died young.

Edmond *[Breaking back in]* And did you hear of those two arrested at the Cairo book fair? They got the electric shock treatment, just because they gave away a Bible to some poor person rather than selling it for 2 cents.

Andrew *[To Fouad]* Yes, I do remember the death of that young girl. Her name was Martha. Tragic.

Fatima Yes, tragic for them, but useful for us now.

Fouad My understanding is that the family never registered the death with the state authorities, only with the church. So, can we apply for an Identity Card for Fatima in the name of their daughter, Martha?

Edmond You must be mad.

Andrew I suppose you could.

Fouad And if we did, would you marry us?

Fatima We really want to do this.

Andrew Well, let's think about it. Fatima, how do you feel about the enforced change of name, at least of your legally identified name before the state?

Fatima I have talked about this with Fouad. It is a big change, and it would be strange, but if that is what is required, then I must do it. And becoming Martha would mean gaining a Christian name in more senses than one.

Edmond But what about your family? You realise you would have to cease contact with them?

Fatima It is a big cost. I'm not sure how they will react; mum and dad might be OK, but I know some of the relatives are likely to be hostile. I realise the only way is to move away from home completely.

Andrew I can see you have thought about this, Martha. *[Pause]* How does it feel to be called Martha?

Fatima Strange! Is that really me? Or who I must become? Choosing to follow Jesus was certainly the biggest decision of my life; it is affecting everything.

Edmond I want nothing to do with this.

Andrew Edmond, I wonder if that is the attitude Jesus would take? Fouad, Fatima, or Martha – I am willing to marry you.

Edmond *[to Andrew]* Andrew if you help them, then consider what risks you are taking. Five-year jail term? What would happen to the church members?
[To Fouad] And Fouad what risks are you taking? An illegal marriage? In-laws you can never meet, and if you do they might try claiming custody of your children? Assuming you are blessed with any, that is.

Fouad I love Fatima and I believe this is God's will for her and for me. I know we will face constant problems until this religious registration system is removed. But I know that Jesus will be with us as He promised.

Edmond Mark my words, in five years time, you three will be in prison....

Follow-up

Edmond was proved right, five years later:

Andrew did get a 5-year jail sentence (to be accurate, for helping someone else)

Fouad & Martha were arrested, together with their two children. They were released, amazingly without being charged, but Martha was badly treated whilst detained