

The Faiz–E–Abrar Islamic Trust School in Lusaka, Zambia, was raided by the Zambian Police. They found the 280 children – all males aged between four and 10 years old – locked up in a warren of cells.

The children, who were clad in Islamic caps and robes, told Cabinet Minister, Gladys Nyirongo, (The Minister of Youth, Sport and Child Development) who accompanied the police, that they all wanted to leave the Islamic School. The boys claimed that they had been kept at the school against their will and that they had been subjected to abuse.

The children reported that they were not allowed to speak their home languages in the school – only Arabic. Those who broke this rule received corporal punishment (beatings) from their instructors.

Adherence to Islamic religious rituals was compulsory. Those “who strayed from the Islamic teachings” were “caged in small rooms and made to eat food kept in a manhole.” The children received little academic teaching but were mainly subjected to Islamic indoctrination.

The police reported that “four inmates were made to sleep on a single mattress in a crammed room of 12”.

The Lusaka police chief Chandela Musonda reported that two foreigners had been arrested including the Chairman and Director of the institution who was identified as “Iqbal Patel, of Asian origin”. The Police investigations of “unlawful confinement and abuse” were continuing.

Cabinet Minister Gladys Nyirongo said that “most of the children were malnourished”. The school had also failed to provide for sick children. Mrs Nyirongo declared: “We don’t want to have another Al-Qaeda network in Zambia. This appears to be a very serious arrangement.”

Parents had apparently been persuaded to give their children to the Faiz–E–Abrar Islamic Trust School because promises that they may receive university education in a Middle East country if

they attained a suitable level of Islamic Education and fluency in Arabic. There are reportedly other Islamic schools in Zambia where children are similarly confined and abused.

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