

ISIS Releases Horrific Video of Christian Executions

A video released by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) on Oct. 7 has showed the jihadis killing three Assyrian Christian hostages with shots to the back of their heads.

According to the Assyrian Monitor for Human Rights, it is the first ISIS video showing Christians in Syria being executed.

Shown in orange jumpsuits at a desert location, the three Assyrians knelt in front of their killers, who were wearing wide-flowing fatigues and black masks.

The murdered Christians were among the 253 villagers abducted seven months ago in north-eastern Syria's Hassaka province, where ISIS jihadis overran 35 Assyrian villages along the Khabur River on Feb 23. The three men were named as Dr. Audisho Enwiya and Ashur Abraham, both from the village of Tel Jazira, and Basam Michael from Tel Shamiram, the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA) said.

Quoting its own sources, the Assyrian Human Rights Network (AHRN) dated the murders to Sept. 23, the morning of this year's annual Eid al-Adha (the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice).

The new video showed three more identified Assyrian victims, who stressed that their fate would be the same as the three just shot dead in front of them, if the militants' demands were not met.

Zaya, 27, William, 51, and Marden, 49, first called themselves "Nasrani" (Nazarites, a pejorative term some Muslims use for Christians), and then stated their full names and home villages. Part of the video was aired by privately owned Lebanese OTV, affiliated with the Free Patriotic Movement headed by veteran politician General Michel Aoun, a Maronite

Christian more recently in political alliance with Hezbollah.

ISIS demanded \$50,000 each in ransom for the remaining Assyrians, now believed to number between 187 and 200. A total of 48 mostly elderly Khabur hostages have been released sporadically since the initial Feb. 23 abductions.

Syrian Catholic Archbishop Jacques Behnan Hindo of Hassaka had told Fides News Agency on 8 Sep. that the kidnappers, contacted through intermediary negotiators, were "asking for much, much less" money to release the Khabur Christians after initial demands of \$100,000 each.

In a press statement released just after the Assyrians' execution video appeared, the European Syriac Union declared, "The ongoing conflict in the Middle East ... is causing irrevocable damage to the native people, minorities, ethnic and religious groups" of Iraq and Syria. "From the beginning of the fall of Mosul city until today, Chaldean-Syriac-Assyrian people and Ezidis (Yazidis) have been subject to killings, executions, ransom and mass-displacement."

When ISIS captured the town of Qaryatain in the western Syrian province of Homs in early August, the jihadis snatched Assyrian hostages from at least 100 families. Fifteen of those were subsequently released, while the militant group announced a month later that they had imposed the punitive jizya Islamic tax on the Christians still living in Qaryatain.

The fate of Syrian Catholic Fr. Jacques Mourad, whom ISIS abducted from St. Elia Monastery near Qaryatain in May, remains uncertain, although pictures of him in captivity were shown on a number of Lebanese television stations in August.