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ASIA/SYRIA - Christians kidnapped: after Houla, they are possible target for revenge

Beirut (Agenzia Fides) - The Syrian Christians are a possible target of revenge by armed groups and Sunni Islamic militants who want to avenge the massacre of Houla. And they are privileged victims of kidnappings. As families of Syrian refugees say who fled from Homs and confirmed by Fides sources in the Syrian Church.
As reported to Fides Agency from Caritas Lebanon, frightened families of Syrian refugees continue to cross the border. They are Alawite Muslims and Christians, especially those who were employed in public offices. Most of them are from villages in Homs, such as Qusayr and others. Christians prefer to escape because they are considered "close to the regime or protected by the regime of Bashar al-Assad." With prolonged episodes of violence and after episodes such as the massacre of Houla, attributed to the Syrian army- although versions are discordant - the desire for revenge of the militia, in opposition, against civilians, "supporters of the regime" also increases. If Sunni militants seek to avenge their loved ones killed, the Alawites are the target (the minority to which Assad belongs) but also Christians.
A greek Syrian Catholic family, who arrived in Lebanon from Qusayr, told Fides that he left the village because of fighting between the army and rebels, but especially for the plague of kidnappings: Many Christians are picked up by masked men, some with a local accent, others no. The kidnappers ask for huge ransoms. One of their Christian relatives - tell the refugees – was killed, kidnapped and tortured because "non-aligned with the revolutionaries." The father and the cousin of the Catholic priest Fr. Issam Kassouha were kidnapped in past days and then, fortunately released. "We do not know if the terrorists were Sunni militants seeking revenge or criminals who want to take advantage of the chaos, hitting the most vulnerable," explain the refugees. "If other massacres happen as that of Houla, Christians may pay a high price," they conclude. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 30/5/2012)

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