



## **ASIA/SYRIA - For the Catholic bishops, father Fady Haddad is a "martyr", appeal for reconciliation**

Damascus (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic bishops of Damascus express condolences for the brutal murder of the Greek-Orthodox priest Fady Haddad, they deplore "the foreign conspiracy that is spreading evil and destruction in the Country" and launch a strong appeal for reconciliation: this is what is read in a statement by the Council of Damascene Catholic Bishops, sent to Fides Agency.

Father Fady, parish priest at the church of St. Elias in Qatana - small town on the outskirts of the Syrian capital - was kidnapped on October 18 while he was negotiating the release of one of his parishioners, already fallen into the hands of a group of unidentified armed men. The Greek-Orthodox priest was found dead six days later. In an appeal sent to Fides Agency, the Council of Damascene Catholic Bishops expresses condolences to Patriarch Ignatius IV and all the brothers of the Greek-Orthodox Church, praying to the Lord "to welcome into His kingdom the priest-martyr together with all the martyrs of Syria".

Before the murder of the priest, the Catholic Bishops express sorrow for all the "attacks against innocent citizens, places of worship, Muslims and Christians and men of religion committed to their humanitarian and spiritual ministry" that are multiplying in these days of suffering in Syria. Repeating that violence and division "do not belong to the nature of the Syrian people and its peaceful traditions", the Catholic leaders of Damascus renew their "appeal for reconciliation" and to "stop violence, the proliferation of weapons and outpouring of blood." We call on all the warring parties to the necessity of dialogue" to find a solution that guarantees peace, freedom, justice and equality of all the citizens. "

The last part of the appeal is addressed to the "Muslim brothers", who in these days celebrate the Feast of Aladha: "Your feast," write the Catholic bishops "is our feast, your joys are our joys, as well as your sorrows are ours. We have lived as brothers, and we will continue to live as brothers."

Padre Fady Haddad is the second priest killed in Syria since the conflict began. In January, priest Bassilios Nassar was killed in Hama while he was trying to rescue a wounded man. As in the case of Fr. Haddad, even on that occasion, the coordination committees of the Syrian uprising questioned the official version of the proposal to the government, who had put the blame of the murder on a group of "armed terrorists." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 27/10/2012).