



ASIA/SYRIA - Armenian Christian martyred: violence and kidnapping continues

Aleppo (Agenzia Fides) – A Christian belonging to the Apostolic Armenian community in Syria was shot dead point blank by terrorists in the grip of religious fanaticism. Yohannes A (whose surname Fides chooses not disclose for the safety of the family,) for the local Armenian community, "is a martyr of the Syrian conflict murdered in odium fidei, out of hatred for the faith". The man was part of a convoy on its way to Aleppo. A group of Islamist extremists halted the minibus in which the man was travelling, demanding passengers' identity papers. Seeing that Yohannes' surname ended with "ian", they identified him as Armenian. They searched him and found he was wearing a cross and chain. One of the terrorists shot point blank at the cross tearing open the man's chest. Local Fides sources in the Armenian community, said "the terrorists were hot-headed, highly exited, as if under the effect of drugs".

This way of behaviour is common to all the various gangs operating roadblocks in Syria: buses halted, passengers robbed or selected for targeted kidnapping, like the 2 priests, Armenian Catholic Ab. Michel Kayyal and Greek Orthodox Ab. Maher Mahfouz taken hostage on 9 February and still in the hands of kidnappers.

Another episode reported to Fides, involved a group of Christians trying to go from Qamishli to Beirut, to escape the dramatic situation locally. The bus was hit by a rocket and two persons were killed: a man named Boutros and a 22 year old girl named Naraya who was soon to be married. The bandits stole everything. The travellers decided to return to Qamishli, rather than risk a journey in mortal danger. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 20/2/2013)