



ASIA/SYRIA – A Catholic priest killed. Bishop Hindo: he offered his martyrdom for peace

Gassanieh (Agenzia Fides) – On Sunday, June 23 the Syrian priest François Murad was killed in Gassanieh, in northern Syria, in the convent of the Custody of the Holy Land where he had taken refuge. This is confirmed by a statement of the Custos of the Holy Land sent to Fides Agency. The circumstances of the death are not fully understood. According to local sources, the monastery where Fr. Murad was staying was attacked by militants linked to the jihadi group Jabhat al-Nusra.

Father François, 49, had taken the first steps in the religious life with the Franciscan Friars of the Custody of the Holy Land, and with them he continued to share close bonds of spiritual friendship. After being ordained a priest he had started the construction of a coenobitic monastery dedicated to St. Simon Stylites in the village of Gassanieh.

After the start of the Civil War, the monastery of St. Simon had been bombed and Fr. Murad had moved to the convent of the Custody for safety reasons and to give support to the remaining few, along with another religious and nuns of the Rosary.

"Let us pray," writes the Custos of the Holy Land Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM "so that this absurd and shameful war ends soon and that the people of Syria can go back to living a normal life." Archbishop Jacques Behnan Hindo, titular of the Syrian Catholic archeparchy in Hassaké-Nisibis reports to Fides: "The whole story of Christians in the Middle East is marked and made fruitful by the blood of the martyrs of many persecutions. Lately, father Murad sent me some messages that clearly showed how conscious he was of living in a dangerous situation, and offered his life for peace in Syria and around the world. " (GV) (Agenzia Fides 24/06/2013).