



## **ASIA/SYRIA - Battle between Islamist factions in Raqqa**

Raqqa (Agenzia Fides) - The clash between the different Islamist factions that oppose the Assad regime has become open war in Raqqa, the city where the Italian Jesuit Paolo Dall'Oglio was abducted five months ago. In recent days, several armed groups have joined together to attack the jihadists of the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL), the formation which recently had assumed control of the city by focusing on the creation of an Islamic caliphate and had also organized symbolic actions like the burning of Bibles and Christian books. According to local sources, to mark the weakening of ISIL is the division between the local militants of the faction and those who came from abroad. The clash between Islamist factions has also led to the release of the fifty anti- Assad militants who were kept in prison in Raqqa by ISIL, as documented in several videos posted on Youtube.

Father Paolo Dall'Oglio had come to Raqqa at the end of last July, when in the city controlled by the rebels there were at least three forces in open conflict with each other. Between July 29 and August 5, the day he went missing, there had been violent clashes in the area, with dead and wounded, among the guerrillas of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and members of Islamist groups, a sign of the tensions already existing then between anti-regime factions. According to the most credible hypothesis, the Jesuit was kidnapped by militants of the ISIL because seen by them as an "ally" of the FSA . (GV) (Agenzia Fides 07/01/2014)