



ASIA/SYRIA - Young Christian killed and beheaded by jihadists

Homs (Agenzia Fides) - Islamist groups have killed and beheaded a young Christian man, seriously wounding another. The incident, which occurred on 8 January, was reported to Fides only now by a priest in the diocese of Homs. The two, Firas Nader (29), and Fadi Matanius Mattah (34), were traveling by car from Homs to the Christian village of Marmarita. A group of five armed jihadists intercepted the vehicle and opened fire on the car. Upon reaching the car, militiamen, noting that Fadi was wearing a cross around his neck, beheaded him. They then took money and documents, leaving Firas on the ground wounded, believing he was already dead. Firas instead managed to escape, reaching the town of Almshtaeih on foot and was then transferred to the hospital in Tartou. Some of the faithful were able to recover the body of Mattah, bringing him to Marmarita, where the local Christian community expressed strong indignation for the horrible act carried out.

According to a statement sent to Fides by Aid to the Church in Need" (ACN), violence against Christians in Syria, is becoming "one of the worst persecutions endured by Christians in this part of the third millennium". According to the latest reports, more than 600,000 Christians - a third of the total Syrian faithful - are internally displaced or living as refugees in neighboring countries. Christian leaders confirm the massive exodus of Christians from Syria, which could seriously jeopardize the future of Christians in the nation.

As ACN in Homs highlights, Marmarita and Hamat, the Syrian population, which includes many Christians, live in severe discomfort and without food, heating, shelter and medicine because of the bitter cold weather that has worsened the humanitarian crisis which exists due to the conflict. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 16/01/2014)