Terrorist group murdered Father Rev. Paulus Iskander Behnam

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Al Qahira/Mousul: The Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriacs who live in and around Baghdad and Mousul have been intensively targeted by the terrorist groups in recent days. Since 30th September 2006 the Christians who live in and around Mousul were complaining about receiving threatening letters from unknown persons or groups.

Following these threats, on 9th October 2006 the Syriac Orthodox Priest Paulus Iskander Behnam of St. Afrem Church in Mousul was kidnapped by a terrorist group whose name is still unknown. The terrorist group, as a condition for the release of the priest, demanded an apology from the Pope Benedict XVI for the comments he had recently made against Islam. Alternatively, he would be released if Shura Al Sunnah made a decision ordering his release. However, without waiting for an answer to their demands, two days later, on 11th October 2006 the terrorist group murdered Father Rev. Paulus Iskander Behnam. The mutilated body of the priest was found in Al Qahira district of Mousul on the same day; while the head, the arms and the legs were cut off from his corpse. This brutal murder of the priest has left a deep anxiety and fear among all the Christians who live in and around Mousul.

On 4th October 2006 following a bomb attack in the Camp Sara district of Baghdad 9 Assyrians lost their lives. The names of the Assyrians who lost their lives in the explosion caused by the bomb attack are: Khiter Elias, Isaac Addo Mirza, Fadi Adel, Thamir Georges, Hisam Simon, Safaa, Zayd Farouq, Ghazwan, Falah Joseph Zara. Further, a few days ago a Christian doctor, Joseph Boutrus was also kidnapped and murdered in Baghdad. And Mr. Raed Faleh Mutter, a Mandaean chemistry teacher was shot dead by 16 bullets in the Southeast of Baghdad.

These attacks that have been launched against the Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac Christians of Iraq recently seem to occur systematically. The Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac people are the most vulnerable and defenceless community in Iraq. Therefore, they are seen as an easy target by the attackers. They become the victims of the terrorist groups as a result of even the smallest act of the West that offends the Muslim World. Accordingly, the terrorist movement in Iraq used the words of the Pope Benedict XVI which he cited from a historical manuscript written in the middle ages as an excuse for its recent campaign of massacres. Thus, the Christians of the Middle East are the first victims of any act made by other Christians around the world. We see the same pattern of attacks, motivated by the same reason(s), against the Christians of the Middle East in many Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.