



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 1, 2013

## Catholic Priest Beheaded by Islamic Terrorists in Syria

A Syrian Catholic priest was executed by Islamic extremists June 23, the Vatican has confirmed. The [Catholic News Service](#) reported that 49-year-old Father Francois Murad, who was in the process of building a Syriac Catholic hermitage near a village on Syria's border with Turkey, was dragged by the Islamist rebels from the Franciscan Convent of St. Anthony in Ghassanieh, Syria, where he had fled for safety, and summarily beheaded.



Franciscan Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, who oversees the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, told the [Vatican News Agency](#) that Murad had taken refuge in the convent after it became clear that he was not safe on the grounds of the hermitage he was constructing. Local sources told the Vatican that the convent was breached by "militants linked to the jihadi group Jabhat al-Nusra," who beheaded the priest and at least three others, using a simple kitchen butcher knife as the execution weapon. The village where both the Franciscan convent and the hermitage are located has been under intense siege by Islamic extremists for several weeks. The Vatican News Agency quoted Father Pizzaballa as saying that the village is now almost completely deserted, save for a few of the Islamist extremists who have terrorized and killed Christians and other villagers. Local residents said the extremists were not Syrian.

As part of its coverage, the U.S.-based [Catholic Online](#) posted an extremely graphic video that included amateur footage of the execution. The video shows a man believed to be Father Murad sitting with his hands bound before he is beheaded by a man with a kitchen knife. The onlookers can be heard and seen chanting *Allahu Akbar* ("God is Great") before pulling out cellphones to photograph and capture on video the whole bloody scene.

The Vatican News Agency reported that Father Murad "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." The Vatican recalled that after the al-Qaeda-linked terrorists began destroying the area, "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."

Franciscan Father Pizzaballa said that Syria has become a "battleground, and not just between Syrian forces, but also for other Arab countries and the international community. The ones paying the price are the poor, the small, and the least, including the Christians."

[The New American](#) reported that thanks to President Obama, the United States has agreed to help arm opponents of the Assad regime, which includes a healthy number of the al-Qaeda-backed thugs reportedly responsible for such terrorism and executions as experienced in the village where Murad was killed. On June 26, [The New American's Alex Newman reported](#) that key lawmakers in both houses of Congress had introduced bills that would block the president's "lawless intervention in Syria on behalf of jihadist rebels, many of whom are openly fighting under the banner of al-Qaeda while massacring Christians and other minorities."



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While the United States has been funding anti-Assad forces in Syria since long before the present violent eruption, Newman notes, “the President has stepped up that assistance, offering everything from training and money to military weapons. Obama’s ‘regime change’ operation, backed by the highest echelons of the global establishment, recently culminated with a deeply unpopular announcement this month that the administration would be openly supplying arms and other military aid to rebel forces.”

Among those “rebels” are the openly anti-Christian al-Qaeda terrorists who have been responsible for terrorist acts in the Middle East, the United States, and elsewhere, and who have now claimed the execution of at least one Catholic cleric in Syria.

Father Pizzaballa said that “the only thing we can do ... is to pray that this folly ends soon and that no more weapons are sent to Syria, because that would only prolong this absurd civil war.”

*Photo of captured priest, immediately prior to his execution*



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