NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Catholic convent, Maronite village latest targets of vandals in Israel

Judith Sudilovsky Catholic News Service | Apr. 9, 2014
Jerusalem

A Catholic convent near Jerusalem and a largely Maronite village in Galilee were damaged in recent weeks as a two-year wave of vandalism directed at Christians and Muslims in Israel and the West Bank continued.

In late March, anti-Christian and anti-American graffiti was scrawled on the walls of the Deir Rafat convent, also known as Our Lady Queen of Palestine. The tires of cars at the monastery also were slashed.

On April 3, residents in the northern village of Jish, known as Gush Halav in Hebrew, awoke to find that the tires of about 40 vehicles had been slashed and graffiti was a painted on a wall saying that "Only goys (non-Jews) will be driven out of our land."

Authorities said they believe the graffiti is a reference to calls for Jews to leave West Bank settlements and a halt to building additional Jewish settlements while U.S.-led Palestinian-Israel talks continue.

The village is home to about 3,000 mostly Maronite residents as well as Muslims.

Authorities said the "price tag" attacks likely were carried out by a group of hardline settlers who have opposed the talks.

The Catholic Ordinaries in the Holy Land condemned the vandalism at the convent. Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal visited the convent a day after the incident and called the acts "madness." He also said he regretted that the planned May 24-26 visit of Pope Francis should be "marred in this way," according to the Latin patriarchate website.

"But we, like the nuns, will continue to pray for these sick minds, so that the Lord takes away their ignorance and their narrowness of mind," Twal said. "However, we must not be silent and we will do everything to ensure that justice is done and that these vandals and fanatics are prosecuted."

A group of Israelis calling themselves "Illuminating Tag," founded to counter the vandals, later visited the convent to express their support for the sisters in residence and condemn the attack.

Maj. Gen. Zohar Dvir, northern district police chief, told reporters the attack was "a criminal, despicable phenomenon."

Elias Elias, head of the Gush Halav Regional Council, said in an interview with a Galilee radio station that the vandalism was the first of its kind in Jish and that it created "a bad feeling."

A month earlier in Gaza, a Catholic church was hit by vandals in a separate unrelated incident. The patriarchate website reported that an explosive device had gone off outside the Church of the Holy Family and graffiti was scrawled on the facade of the church.

Fr. Jorge Hernandez, a parish priest, extinguished the resulting fire. Damage was modest, but the incident "has deeply shaken the small Christian community," the patriarchate said.

Community and religious leaders visited the parish following the attack in a show of "solidarity and sympathy," said the posting. The patriarchate's general administrator later celebrated Mass with parishioners on behalf of Twal.

---

[1]

[1]

Enjoy this article?
Help support more like it by **donating today!** [1]

Source URL (retrieved on *09/04/2015 - 16:41*): http://ncronline.org/news/global/catholic-convent-maronite-village-latest-targets-vandals-israel

Links:
[1] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/article-end