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Afghanistan mission head appeals for 'silent prayer' for kidnapped Jesuit

N.J. Viehland | Jun. 3, 2014 NCR Today

The superior of the church mission of Afghanistan (sui iuris) [1] has appealed for "silent prayer" for the resolution of yesterday's kidnapping of the priest who heads Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in the country.

Msgr. Giuseppe Moretti, Superior of the "missio sui iuris" of Afghanistan speaking to [2] *Fides* news agency asked the media to keep information in strict confidence "so that the institutional bodies can do their job and save Fr. Alexis Prem Kumar."

Moretti also appealed, "Let us live this moment, after the kidnapping of a Jesuit priest, in profound, silent prayer and full of hope.? He expressed hope that the current ?sad moment? will yield positive results.

Unidentified gunmen seized Kumar on Monday afternoon in Sohadat village of Herat province when he visited a school there for Afghan returnee children managed by JRS [3].

JRS South Asia Regional Director Jesuit Fr. Stan Fernandes in a statement [4] to independent news service *Matters India*, said the armed men surrounded the school campus about 12:45 p.m., fired shots in the air, caught hold of Kumar and drove off with him in a car.

No group has claimed responsibility for the abduction.

Moretti said [2] kidnappings of foreigners are common throughout the country and Kumar's abductors "could be Taliban factions or common criminals."

Kumar, 47 year-old priest from Tamil Nadu, southern India, joined the Society of Jesus in 1988. He had more than two decades of varied experience in social development when he started his assignment in Herat in July 2011. He assumed his post in 2012 as director of JRS operations in Afghanistan which supports government education programs in Kabul, Herat, Bamiyan, and Daikundi.

JRS [5] is an international Catholic organization with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

The Afghan National Security and Afghan Police are reportedly [4] conducting intensive search operations for Kumar.

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Links:

[1] http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dafgh.html
[2] http://www.fides.org/en/news/35830-ASIA_AFGHANISTAN_Jesuit_kidnapped_Fr_Moretti_asks_for_prayer_and_silence#.U422b5SSwTk
[3] http://www.jrs.net/
[4] http://mattersindia.com/no-breakthrough-in-jesuit-abduction-case-in-afghanistan/
[5] http://en.jrs.net/about