

## 2 priests, Canadian nun abducted in Cameroon



*This photo released by Vicenza Diocesi, Saturday April 5, 2014 shows Vicenza Bishop Beniamino Pizziol, second from right, flanked by father Gianantonio Allegri, left, and Giampaolo Marta, right, during a visit in Jericho, near Maroua, Cameroon, on Jan. 2014.*

Officials say two Italian priests and a Canadian nun working as missionaries in northern Cameroon have been abducted. Italy's foreign ministry said the abduction occurred during the night between Friday and Saturday about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border with Nigeria. It identified the priests as Giampaolo Marta and Gianantonio Allegri, but declined to give other details, including the Canadian's identity, to avoid compromising efforts for the missionaries' release.



( AP Photo/Vicenza Diocese)View Photo

*This photo released by Vicenza Diocese, Saturday April 5, 2014 shows Vicenza Bishop Beniamino Pizziol, center, flanked by father Gianantonio Allegri, right, and Giampaolo Marta, left, during a mass in Tchakidjebe church, near Maroua, Cameroon, during a visit on Jan. 2014.*

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ROME (AP) — Armed groups on Saturday abducted two Italian priests and a Canadian nun working as missionaries in northern Cameroon, Italy's government and Catholic church officials said.

Italy's foreign ministry identified the priests as Giampaolo Marta and Gianantonio Allegri, but declined to give other details, including the Canadian's identity, to avoid compromising efforts for the missionaries' release.

A Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Ciro Benedettini, said Pope Francis was praying for the three and "expressed hope for a solution."

Italy cautions against travel to the area, which is 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border with Nigeria "in consideration of the risk of kidnappings due to presence of jihadist elements coming from Nigeria."

"It isn't ruled out that those who carried out the abduction belong to the Islamic fundamentalist group Boko Haram," Vatican Radio said.

Boko Haram has warned Cameroon to stay out of its fight with the Nigerian military, threatening otherwise to carry its war for an Islamic state into the neighboring country.

The priests were assigned from the Vicenza diocese in northern Italy. No one has claimed responsibility, diocese officials said.

Vatican Radio broadcast an interview with an unidentified priest from Vicenza, who said the kidnappers seized the Canadian woman, but left nuns from Cameroon.

The Italian news agency ANSA quoted diocesan officials as saying the nun is 80.

Associated Press