

Surviving Missionary of Charity tells the story of the ISIS killings



Yemeni security forces gather outside the Missionaries of Charity home in Aden (AP)

The text of Sister Sally's eyewitness account, as recorded by another nun

Two weeks ago, four Missionaries of Charity in Yemen were among the victims of a brutal terrorist attack on a care home where the nuns were working. In this week's Catholic Herald, Gerard Russell examines the background to the murders.

One of the MCs, Sister Sally, survived, and gave an account of the events to another nun, Sister Rio. Her account was recorded by Sister Adriana, whose note is available here. A full transcript is published below.

SISTER RIO'S WORDS TO SISTER ADRIANA, MC: Friday, midday, March 4, 2016

Sisters had Mass, breakfast as usual. As usual, Father stays back in chapel to say prayers, then to fix things around the compound.

8:00am: Said apostolate prayer and all 5 went to home.

8:30am: ISIS dressed in blue came in, killed guard and driver.

5 young Ethiopian men (Christian) began running to tell the sisters ISIS was here to kill them. They were killed one by one. They tied them to trees, shot them in the head and smashed their heads.

The sisters ran 2 by 2 in different directions, as they have mens and ladies home. 4 working women were screaming, "Don't kill the sisters! Don't kill the sisters!" One was the cook for 15 years. They killed them as well.

They caught Sr. Judith and Sr. Reginette first, tied them up, shot them in the head and smashed their heads. When the sisters ran in different directions, the Superior ran to the convent to try to warn Father Tom.

They caught Sr. Anselm and Sr. Marguerite, tied them, shot them in the head and smashed their heads in the sand.

Meanwhile, the Superior could not get to the convent. It is not clear how many ISIS men were there.

She saw all the sisters and helpers killed. The ISIS men were already getting to the convent so she went into the refrigerator room, since the door was open. These ISIS men were everywhere, searching for her, as they knew there were 5. At least three times they came into the refrigerator room. She did not hide, but remained standing behind the door – they never saw her. This is miraculous.

Meanwhile, at the convent, Father had heard the screaming and consumed all the Hosts. He had no time to consume the large Host, so he threw the oil out of the sanctuary lamp and dissolved it in the water.

A neighbor saw them put Father Tom in their car. They did not find any trace of Father anywhere. All the religious articles were smashed and destroyed – Our Lady, crucifix, altar, tabernacle, lectionary stand – even their prayer books and Bibles.

10:00 or 10:15am: The ISIS men finished and left.

Sr. Sally came to get the bodies of the sisters. She got them all. She went to the patients to each one individually to see if they were OK. All were OK. Not one was hurt.

The son of the woman who was the cook (who was killed) was calling her on her cellphone. Since she was not answering, he called the police, and he went with the police there and found this great massacre. The police and the son arrived at about 10:30am.

The police tried to take Sr. Sally out of there — she refused to leave the people who were crying, "Don't leave us; stay with us." But the police forced her to go with them because the ISIS knew there were 5 sisters, and they were convinced they will not stop until they kill her too. So finally she had to leave. She took one set of clothes and the sisters' bodies, and the police brought them to an

international hospital called “Doctors Without Borders” for protection. As there was not enough room in the mortuary of that hospital for the sisters’ bodies, the police brought their bodies to a bigger hospital mortuary.

Sr. Sally told Sr. Rio she is so sad because she is alone and did not die with her sisters. Sr. Rio told her God wanted a witness and told her, “Who would have found the sisters’ bodies and who would ever tell us what happened? God wants us to know.”

Pope Francis had his secretary contact the Yemen Secretary of State very often – about once a week to check up on the sisters and reassure them of his closeness. Today, the Pope’s secretary sent the message: “I thank them — Little M.C. martyrs.” He said he is offering the 40-hour First Friday devotion for them.

Sr. Sally told Sr. Rio that Fr. Tom tells them every day, “Let us be ready for martyrdom.”

Sr. Judith — they were trying so hard to take her for senior course, but they were not able to get her out.

Sr. Reginette — they were trying to send her for junior course but could not get her out.

God wanted them there.

Aden is rich city – a port city. Aden wanted to be its own state, so they got ISIS in to help them fight against Yemen. So ISIS won for Aden. That was the war last year, with all the bombing. They won, so that is over, but ISIS won’t leave. They want to take over and exterminate any Christian presence. They did not kill the sisters in the war because they had no political reason to waste time on them. But now, they are the only Christian presence, and ISIS wants to get rid of all Christianity. So they are real martyrs — died because they are Christians. They could have died so many times in the war, but God wanted it to be clear they are martyrs for the faith.

Sr. Rio said Sr. Sally is fully surrendered. The police are trying to get her out because they will just keep after her until they kill her. She is fully surrendered and told Sr. Rio – whatever God wants. She said the other Muslims are so respectful of them. She said to pray that their blood will be the seeds for peace in the Middle East and to stop the ISIS.

She said that if they kidnapped Father Tom most probably they will wait 2 days, then ask in exchange for Father Tom either money or the release of their members held in prison.

Sr. Rio said they were so faithful – ISIS knew exactly when they leave and when to break in. And because of their faithfulness, they were in the right place at the right time and were ready when the Bridegroom came.

Sr. Adriana said she thinks the crushing of the heads has some evil connection with “She will crush head of the serpent,” some kind of mockery or evil meaning.

