4 nuns, 12 others killed in 'diabolical' attack on elderly home in Yemen

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CNN

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/05/middleeast/yemen-violence-nuns-elderly-killed/>

There are few places in Yemen -- homes, schools, hospitals -- that haven't been scarred by the ongoing war ravaging that Arab nation.

And now, a home for the elderly run by Catholic missionaries is among them.

The Vatican on Saturday reported the murder of four Missionaries of Charity members plus 12 others at an elderly facility in the port city of Aden.

[According to an official Vatican News report](http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-condemns-diabolic-attack-on-missionar), gunmen burst into the building Friday, went room-to-room handcuffing victims, then shot all 16 in the head.

[Agenzia Fides](http://www.fides.org/it/news/59563-ASIA_YEMEN_Attacco_terrorista_uccise_4_suore_di_Madre_Teresa_insieme_a_collaboratori_e_a_anziani_da_loro_assistiti#.VtrJIPlVhuo), an information service for Catholic missionaries, reported the missionaries -- who belonged to the group founded by [soon-to-be-sainted Mother Teresa](http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/18/europe/pope-francis-mother-teresa-second-miracle/) -- were nuns. Two were from Rwanda, one from India and the fourth from Kenya.

The attack -- characterized by Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin as an "act of senseless and diabolical violence" -- spurred a sharp rebuke from Pope Francis.

According to Parolin, the Pope "prays that this pointless slaughter will awaken consciences, lead to a change of heart and inspire all parties to lay down their arms and take up the path of dialogue."

It wasn't immediately clear who carried out Friday's bloody attack. Yet the harsh, violent reality in Yemen is indisputable, as is its toll on the people there.

The impoverished Muslim nation on the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula has faced violence for years, some of it tied to al Qaeda elements that found a home there.

The latest round of unrest began in late 2014 amid angry protests by Houthis, a minority Shiite group that's long held sway in northern Yemen but hadn't had much influence in the country's Sunni-led government.

The Houthi rebels tool over the presidential palace in January 2015, forcing out President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi on the way to taking over Sanaa, the capital city, and other areas.

But Hadi would return in force, aided by [warplanes from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and others that began going after](http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/26/middleeast/yemen-saudi-arabia-airstrikes/) Houthi targets last March.

Those strikes continue months later, as has the bloodshed.

[U.N. Human Rights spokesman Rupert Colville has said](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52938#.VtroOvlVhuo) the fighting is taking a "terrible toll" on Yemeni civilians. As of early January, he reported over 8,100 casualties, including about 2,800 deaths -- and there's no reason to believe those numbers haven't continued to climb.