



Diocese of Mamfe

REV. FR. COSMAS OBOTO ONDARI, MILL HILL MISSIONARY KILLED IN ST. MARTIN OF TOURS PARISH, KEMBONG, DIOCESE OF MAMFE, CAMEROON

STATEMENT OF THE BISHOP OF MAMFE DIOCESE

The Diocese of Mamfe is Bereaved! The St. Joseph's Missionary Society (Mill Hill) is Bereaved! The Ondari Family is bereaved! The Kenyan Nation is bereaved!

At about 3.00 pm local time, on Wednesday the 21st of November, 2018, Rev. Fr. Cosmas Omboto Ondari, a Mill Hill Missionary, who was in front of the Church of the Parish of St. Martin of Tours, Kembong, was shot and killed on the spot in cold blood. Fr. Cosmas Ondari was the Parochial Vicar of the St. Martin of Tours Parish in Kembong since April 2017.

Born in Gucha, in Kenya on the 19th of September 1985, Fr. Ondari joined the Missionary Society of St. Joseph, otherwise known as the Mill Hill Missionaries and was sent to do his Philosophy studies in the Queen of Apostles Seminary (Philosophicum) in Jinja in Uganda. After his studies of Philosophy, the young Ondari was sent to Cameroon for pastoral experience and he spent two years in Fundong Parish, in the Archdiocese of Bamenda; under the supervision of Fr. Christopher Hancock, MHM.

After his pastoral experience, he returned to his home country in Kenya where he did his studies in Theology in the Tangaza University College in Nairobi. Upon completion of his studies, he was ordained on the 26th of March 2017 in his home Diocese of Kisi by Bishop Joseph Mairura Okemwa.

In April 2017, the Superiors of the Mill Hill Society appointed Fr. Ondari to Mamfe Diocese where he was then posted to the St. Martin of Tours Parish, Kembong as his first appointment, and which turned out to be his last appointment as a priest.

Already in December, 2017, when the security situation in Kembong was very tense, Fr. Ondari and his Parish Priest Fr. Tiberius Vouni, MHM, along side with some of their parishioners, moved out from Kembong to Mamfe. The village of more than 5000 people was almost completely abandoned and many houses were burnt down. In April, 2018, in a bid to give hope to the desperate population, many of whom were living in the bushes in horrendous conditions, Fr. Ondari and his Parish Priest courageously opted to go back to Kembong so as to encourage the people to return. Some of the people with whom they ran to Mamfe went back and sought refuge in the closed down premises of the Catholic School in Kembong. It was in this context that Fr. Ondari was brutally and recklessly murdered on the 21st of November, 2018.

Eye Witness accounts say that he was killed by Government Soldiers (Gendarmarie Nationale), who were shooting at random from their passing vehicle. A

certain Mr. Johnson Ndip Nchot was also shot in front of his house, a few meters from the Church building.

I visited Kembong Parish on Thursday the 22nd of November, 2018, and I personally counted 21 Bullet holes made on the Church building of Kembong where at the time, the priest, the Catechist and many Christians were carrying out various activities in the Mission compound. The blood of the murdered priest was still clearly seen on the cemented entrance to the Church just at the door. He died right in the house of God and it is our prayer that the God whom he served so well will welcome him into his eternal kingdom.

I call on all the Christians of the Diocese of Mamfe, especially the Christians of Kembong Parish, to stay calm and be united in prayer. The forces of evil are on a rampage against the Church of God, but as Christians, we believe in the promise of Christ that the gates of the underworld will never prevail over the Church (Mtt.16:18). At the same time we must remain vigilant, because the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat, stand up to him strong in faith (1Pet.5:8-9).

While we mourn with the Mill Hill Family and the Natural family of Fr. Ondari, we trust that he died doing what he had offered his life for. He was serving humanity far away from home and family, but he was one with the People of Kembong who loved him so well and whom he loved so much .

It is our fervent hope that these killings should stop in our diocese and in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. The value of human life is diminishing and the human person is wasted away for any flimsy reason or even for sport. This has to stop and we call on all those involved in killing innocent civilians to refrain from these inhuman and monstrous acts.

I call on the powers that be to carry out a thorough investigation into this heinous crime committed against an innocent and peace loving missionary and bring the culprits to face justice. This is the only way those who have been hurt can truly be comforted, and peace can return to our land.

Since December 2017, at the end of every Mass in the Diocese of Mamfe, we pray the prayer of St. Francis for peace. I call on all our Christians to intensify this prayer and not to relent, because God will surely not abandon his people. We surrender everything to Jesus the Prince of Peace who is evidently absent from our Land, that he may return soon and we know that in His days, Justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails (Ps.72:7)

May the soul of Fr. Cosmas Omboto Ondari, rest in Perfect Peace.

Mamfe, this 22nd Day of November, 2018



+Andrew NKEA,
Bishop of Mamfe.

