

# MUSLIMS APPEAL FOR PRIEST'S RELEASE

## **Aid in Manhunt for Captive Irish Missionary**

PAGADIAN CITY, Philippines, OCT. 21, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Muslim leaders in the Philippines are condemning the kidnapping of a Catholic priest, affirming that this act is contrary to the religious values of both Islam and Christianity.

Columban Father Michael Sinnott, who came from Ireland to serve in the Philippines 40 years ago, was abducted Oct. 11 from his home in Pagadian City.

The 79-year-old priest has been frail and in need of medication since an open heart surgery he underwent in July.

The Filipino government appealed to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a Muslim rebel group, for help in finding the kidnapped priest.

Although there has been violent conflict between the two forces, which resulted in hundreds of deaths only months ago, last week they agreed to work together to rescue Father Sinnott.

Today, the Inquirer Mindanao reported that the Moro Islamic forces are closing in on the location and identities of the kidnappers.

Eid Kabalu, chief of civil-military affairs, stated that the central command expects to receive this information within the next 24 hours.

The Muslim forces plan to surround the captors and cut off escape while allowing the government authorities to take the lead on the final confrontation.

Meanwhile, the National Ulema Conference of the Philippines, a body of Muslim leaders,

issued an appeal for the release of the priest.

They stated that this act is "contrary to the principles of Islam, Christianity and other religions," [AsiaNews](#) reported.

The leaders also decried the media's exploitation of Islam to "divide Muslims from their Christian brothers."

On World Mission Day, celebrated Sunday, Benedict XVI made particular mention of Father Sinnott in his general audience.

The Pope recalled all "missionaries -- priests, men and women religious and lay volunteers -- who consecrate their existence to bringing the Gospel into the world, even facing hardships and difficulties and sometimes real persecutions."