

Armed men kidnap two nuns who work with Somali refugees in Kenya

VATICAN CITY – Two Italian nuns, both in their 60s, were kidnapped Nov. 10 in northeastern Kenya near the border with Somalia, the Vatican newspaper reported.

L'Osservatore Romano identified the nuns as Sister Caterina Giraudo, 67, and Sister Maria Teresa Oliviero, 61, both from Cuneo, Italy, where their religious order, the Contemplative Missionary Movement of Father Charles de Foucauld, is based.

The newspaper said the women had been working for years with Somali refugees in Kenya.

Members of the Kenya Red Cross Society told authorities the nuns were taken by a group of armed men, who also stole three vehicles.

Father Pino Isoardi, head of the Contemplative Missionary Movement, told Vatican Radio that the nuns, like all the members of the group, “share their lives with the poor. We don't have any big structures. We welcome into our homes the sick, the aged, people who are starving.”

As of midafternoon Nov. 10, the kidnappers had not been in contact with the congregation, he said.

Father Isoardi said he hoped that in Kenya “the elders, who have authority in that area, are able to make contact” with the kidnappers and arrange the sisters' release.

The Contemplative Missionary Movement, founded in Italy in the mid-1950s, is made up of religious who live in small communities in the midst of slums, refugee camps and other areas of great poverty.