

Pope condemns kidnapping of innocent people by armed militias

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy – Pope Benedict XVI condemned the kidnapping of innocent people especially by armed militias, calling such abductions “criminal acts” that violate human dignity and offend divine law.

The pope also called for an end to the nuclear arms race, saying atomic technology should respect the environment and only be used for peaceful purposes.

“The practice of exploiting innocent people in order to make partisan demands is becoming more widespread among armed groups,” the pope said July 29 during the Angelus address at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

Such abductions represent “serious violations of human dignity which go against every basic rule of civilization and law, and seriously offend divine law,” he said.

Although the pope did not call attention to any particular armed group or people being held hostage, the Vatican newspaper L’Osservatore Romano said the appeal was aimed at extremist Islamic Taliban fighters who seized 23 South Korean Christian aid workers in Afghanistan July 19.

The pope appealed to all hostage-takers, asking that “the authors of such criminal acts desist from the evil they have carried out and release their victims unharmed.”

Meanwhile, before reciting the Angelus prayer, the pope reminded the faithful gathered in the courtyard of his summer residence that July 29 marked the 50th anniversary of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

He said the Vatican, which is a member state, “fully approves” the agency’s goals which include seeking “to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.”

Pope Benedict said it was ever more urgent to encourage nations and powers to commit to “the nonproliferation of nuclear arms, the promotion of a progressive and agreed-upon nuclear disarmament, and the promotion of the peaceful and safe use of nuclear technology for authentic development.”

He said the peaceful use of nuclear technology must also take into account respect for the environment and the needs of the world’s poor.

Quoting from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he said the arms race must be replaced with “a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral,

cultural and economic development.”