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Vittorio Arrigoni, Italian peace activist, kidnapped and killed in Gaza

Friday 15 April 2011, by [Al Jazeera](#), [ISM](#), [The Guardian](#) (Date first published: 15 April 2011).

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INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT & FREE GAZA MOVEMENT

ISM confirms the death of Vittorio Arrigoni

For Immediate Release

(April 14, 2011) - Today, our friend and colleague, Vittorio Arrigoni, a journalist and human rights defender working in the Gaza Strip, was kidnapped by Salafists, members of a very small extremist group in Gaza.

Vittorio has been active in the Palestine cause for almost 10 years. For the past two and a half years, he has been in Gaza with the International Solidarity Movement, monitoring human rights violations by Israel, supporting the Palestinian popular resistance against the Israeli occupation and disseminating information about the situation in Gaza to his home country of Italy. He was aboard the siege-breaking voyage in 2008 with the Free Gaza Movement and was incarcerated in Israeli prisons several times. He was in Gaza throughout Israel's brutal assault (Operation Cast Lead), assisting medics and reporting to the world what Israel was doing to the Palestinian people. He has been arrested numerous times by Israeli forces for his participation in Palestinian non-violent resistance in the West Bank and Gaza. His last arrest and deportation from the area was a result of the Israeli confiscation of Palestinian fishing vessels in Gazan territorial waters.

Vittorio frequently writes on the issue of Palestine for the Italian newspaper, *IL Manifesto* and Peacereporter. Additionally, he maintains a popular blog (<http://guerrillaradio.iobloggo.com/>) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Vittoriatio-Arrigoni/>).

Khalil Shaheen, a friend of Vittorio and Head of the Economic and Social Rights Department at the Palestinian Center for Human Rights said, "This is outside of our traditions. We are calling for the immediate release of my best friend. Vittorio Arrigoni is a hero of Palestine. He was available everywhere to support all the poor people, the victims. I'm calling on the local authorities here in Gaza, and all security departments, to do their best to guarantee his safety and immediate release."

Vittorio was granted honorary citizenship for his work on promoting the cause of the Palestinian people. Members of Gazan civil society are demanding his release; tomorrow at 4:00pm there will be a mass demonstration in Jundi Square.

ISM confirms the death of Vittorio Arrigoni

Posted on: April 15, 2011 | 875 133

The International Solidarity Movement is shocked and deeply saddened by the killing of our friend and colleague Vittorio Arrigoni. Vik was an inspiring activist and generous soul. Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts.

We will post more information here as it becomes available.

* <http://palsolidarity.org/2011/04/17693/>

PETITION: We demand the immediate release of Vittorio Arrigoni

A Petition to save Vittorio was online, before his death was announced.

To: Gaza government

Vittorio Arrigoni, ISM volunteer in the Gaza strip, was kidnapped by Salafi Jihadis earlier today. A video was released at 11am, giving the Hamas government in the strip 30 hours for a prisoner exchange or else they would kill Mr. Arrigoni. Here is the video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2XtPcDprbM>

We, human rights activists, demand the immediate and safe release of Vittorio as soon as possible. We pray that all action necessary be taken to ensure that Mr. Arrigoni will be free and unharmed.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

* <http://www.petitiononline.com/Lsal92/petition.html>

Italian peace activist killed in Gaza

Hamas rulers of the Strip confirm the arrest of one person in connection with the killing of Vittorio Arrigoni.

The kidnapping in Gaza would be the first since the abduction in 2007 of BBC's Alan Johnston. Hamas officials have said they found the body of an Italian peace activist based in Gaza who was kidnapped by an armed assailant.

The officials said Hamas police stormed an apartment in Gaza Strip belonging to a member of the group that released a video of the activist, identified as Vittorio Arrigoni.

In a statement, the Hamas interior ministry said the man was killed shortly after he was abducted at midday on Thursday.

Ehab al-Ghusein, ministry spokesman, said he was killed "in an awful way." He said the kidnappers planned from the beginning to kill him, not to trade him for captives.

A ministry statement denounced the killing as "a crime that does not reflect the values, morals, religion and customs" of the people of Gaza.

An Italian doctor was on his way from Israel to examine the body, a Hamas official said.

After a clash early on Friday hours of his abduction, Hamas police found the body of the peace campaigner. It was not immediately clear how he died.

Al Jazeera's Nicole Johnston, reporting from Gaza, said: "Hamas has rounded up a lot of Salafi members since this news came out to try and get more information but at this stage they have told us that there has only been one confirmed arrest."

"Hamas is very keen to say that the security situation in Gaza is solid. It's been really pushing home the message that Hamas is in control and that Gaza is safe," she said.

Before the body was found, the Italian foreign ministry said in a statement that it was aware of the kidnapping, was in touch with Arrigoni's family and was taking steps to ensure his safety.

Foreign aid workers said Arrigoni was an activist with a pro-Palestinian group called the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), who was also working as a journalist and writer.

Release of Salafi prisoners

In a video posted on YouTube on Thursday, the group said it had taken him hostage in order to secure the release of an unspecified number of their members who had been arrested by the security forces in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

It said it would execute him if their demands were not met by 5:00 pm (1400 GMT) on Friday.

The Al Jazeera correspondent said: "The little that we do know about why he was kidnapped in Gaza has come from Youtube video that those responsible posted online."

"In that video they said they would not release him until all of Salafi prisoners who are currently in jail in Gaza, are freed. They also called for release of one of the main Salafi leaders. They said they would not free him until those people were freed from jail. That seems to be the motive behind the case."

"We kidnapped the Italian prisoner Vittorio and we call on the Haniya government ... to release all our prisoners," it said, referring to Hamas premier Ismail Haniya.

"If you don't respond quickly to our demands, within 30 hours from 11:00 am (0800 GMT) on April 14, we will execute this prisoner," it said.

"We don't know which group was behind it. At this stage the main Salafi groups are denying any responsibility. So the situation is quite confusing as who is exactly behind it," the Al Jazeera correspondent said.

Arrigoni was shown blindfolded in the 3-minute clip with blood around his right eye and a hand can be seen pulling his head up by his hair to face the camera.

The Arabic text that accompanied the footage of Arrigoni also said "the Italian hostage entered our land only to spread corruption" and it described Italy as "the infidel state".

Arrigoni is the first foreign national to be abducted in the Gaza Strip since BBC journalist Alan Johnston, who was held for 114 days by a group named the Army of Islam. He was released in 2007.

* *Aljazeera, Last Modified:* 15 Apr 2011 06:58:

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/04/2011414194735306181.html>

Body of kidnapped Italian peace activist Vittorio Arrigoni found in Gaza

Two men arrested after security officials say they found body in abandoned house

The body of Vittorio Arrigoni, the Italian pro-Palestinian activist who was abducted in Gaza, has been found in an abandoned house, Hamas security officials say [Link to this video](#)

An Italian pro-Palestinian activist has reportedly been kidnapped and killed by Islamic militants in Gaza.

The body of Vittorio Arrigoni was found in an abandoned house in the Gaza Strip on Friday following his abduction by militants, a Hamas official said.

Two men were arrested and others were being sought in the killing, the official added.

A Jihadist Salafi group in the Gaza Strip aligned with al-Qaida had threatened to execute Arrigoni by 5pm local time on Thursday unless their leader, whom Hamas arrested last month, was freed.

"A security force entered a house and they found the Italian's man body, he is dead," the source told Reuters from the scene.

Arrigoni, a pacifist and blogger, had lived in the Gaza Strip for some time.

In a YouTube clip posted by his abductors, he was shown blindfolded with blood around his right eye and a hand can be seen pulling his head up by his hair to face the camera.

The accompanying Arabic text said: "The Italian hostage entered our land only to spread corruption." It described Italy as "the infidel state".

The body was found dressed in black clothes as he appeared in the video clip, a witness said. No blood was seen, which suggested he may have been strangled or hanged.

Arrigoni was the first foreign national to be abducted in the Gaza Strip since BBC journalist Alan Johnston, who was held for 114 days by an al Qaida-inspired clan group named the Army of Islam. He was released in 2007.

Arrigoni arrived in the Gaza Strip on a boat bringing humanitarian supplies in 2008 that Israel, which enforces a blockade on the tiny coastal territory, allowed into Gaza port.

* *The Guardian*, Friday 15 April 2011.

