

Islamic State beheads British aid worker David Haines in new video

-, 14.09.2014, 02:19 Time

USPA News - British aid worker David Haines, who was kidnapped in northern Syria early last year, has been beheaded by the Islamic State, according to a video released on late Saturday, making him the third Western hostage to be beheaded by the al-Qaeda splinter group in less than a month. A masked jihadist standing next to Haines in what is believed to be the Syrian desert directly addressed British Prime Minister David Cameron in the 2:30-minute video, blaming Britain's support for the military campaign against the Islamic State for the death of Haines.

It is believed the video was shot over the last week as the executioner mentioned recent events. "This British man has to pay the price for your promise, Cameron, to arm the Peshmerga (Kurdish fighters) against the Islamic State," the executioner said. "Your evil alliance with America, which continues to strike the Muslims of Iraq, and most recently bombed the Haditha Dam, will only accelerate your destruction. And playing the role of the obedient lapdog, Cameron, will only drag you and your people into another bloody and unwinnable war." Similar to other recent executions, Haines also spoke in the video, which is titled "A Message to the Allies of America," but analysts have typically dismissed such speeches as having been scripted by the Islamic State and delivered under duress after torture. In the remarks, Haines said he holds Cameron "entirely responsible" for his own execution. "You entered voluntarily into a coalition with the United States against the Islamic State, just as your predecessor, Tony Blair, did, following a trend amongst our British prime ministers who can't find the courage to say no to the Americans," Haines said. "Unfortunately, it is we, the British public, that in the end will pay the price for our parliament's selfish decisions." After the execution, the jihadist is standing next to another hostage, identified as British aid worker Alan Henning, in a threat to execute him as well. "If you, Cameron, persist in fighting the Islamic State, then you, like your master Obama, will have the blood of your people on your hands," he said. Responding to the release of the video, Cameron described the murder of Haines as "an act of pure evil" and vowed to find those responsible. "We will do everything in our power to hunt down these murderers and ensure they face justice, however long it takes," the prime minister said. Downing Street said Cameron would chair a meeting of the government's emergency committee, COBRA, on Sunday morning. "I am sickened at the disgusting, barbaric killing of David Haines," British Labour Party leader Ed Miliband said. "He was somebody whose only purpose was to help innocent people, themselves victims of conflict. That ISIL would choose to kill him says everything about their warped logic and murderous ways." Miliband added: "Acts like this will not weaken but strengthen the resolve of Britain and the international community to defeat ISIL and their ideology. My deepest condolences and thoughts are with his family as they cope with this terrible crime. And the hearts of the British people will go out to them." Haines, who worked for the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) to support tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, was abducted by an armed group in March 2013 while traveling through northern Syria alongside an Italian colleague to reach safety at the Turkish border. It is believed the group later sold Haines to the Islamic State. Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond said it should be remembered that Haines, a 44-year-old father of two from Scotland, was in the region as an aid worker to help the local population. "The release of a video purporting to be the beheading of David Haines has demonstrated a degree of brutality which defies description," he said. "His murder will be totally condemned by all people with any sense of humanity." The release of the execution video came just hours after Haines' family made a public appeal to the Islamic State for them to respond to their messages. "We have sent messages to you to which we have not received a reply. We are asking those holding David to make contact with us," the family said earlier on Saturday. Earlier this month, after the Islamic State threatened to execute Haines, ACTED said the Paris-based organization was shocked and called the threats intolerable. "ACTED strongly condemns the violence and threats against David. A man's life should never be threatened on account of his humanitarian commitment," the organization said on September 5. David had been working as a humanitarian since 1999, helping victims of conflict in the Balkans, Africa and the Middle East. Over the last month alone, the Islamic State has beheaded two American journalists - James Foley and Steven Sotloff - in an attempt to stop U.S. military intervention in the region. The beheadings were shown in two separate videos which shocked Western nations and which highlighted the situation of about 20 other journalists who are still missing in Syria. Earlier this week, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said Islamic State fighters are also threatening to execute Raad Mohamed Al-Azaoui, a cameraman for Sama Salah Aldeen TV, after he was abducted on September 7 when he was in Samara in the northern Iraqi province of Saladin. The group has since threatened to behead Al-Azaoui for refusing to work for the Islamic State. The Islamic State, which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), is an al-Qaeda splinter group which declared itself an Islamic caliphate earlier this year after seizing much of northeastern Syria and making huge gains in parts of Iraq. Their rule has been marked with brutal violence - such as beheadings and crucifixions - of anyone opposing the "caliphate."

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2705/islamic-state-beheads-british-aid-worker-david-haines-in-new-video.html>

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619