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## **“I cried out: Lord, why did you abandon me?” Father Maccalli on his abduction in Niger**

"I cried out to God: why have you abandoned me?". Father **Pierluigi Maccalli** was held prisoner of Islamic extremists in the Sahel for two years, from September 17, 2018 to October 8, 2020. His abduction deeply affected the missionary world connected to the Society of African Missions (SMA Fathers), which he is a member of. In an interview ahead of Missionary Martyrs Day on March 24 by [Noticum](#) and the editorial staff of [Fondazione Missio](#) (in partnership with "[Luci nel mondo](#)"), he recounted his harrowing, occasionally dramatic experience. "You realise that the only thing is to resist in order to exist"; "you discover that what matters is *shalom*, harmony between peoples... the Gospel, pure faith... The mission is to meet people, to live in fraternity." Father Maccalli, testimony of a "Church of the peripheries", gave an account of the various stages of his abduction, his relationship with the jailers and his hopes for the future.



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[a journalist who reported the experiences of Fr Maccalli and other missionaries who had been there with him and whom he met in Italy. "I don't know if I would have withstood all of this ...". The documentary film features the first-hand account of four missionaries: Pierluigi Maccalli, Carlos Bazzara, Vito Giroto and Davide Camorani. Father Vito Giroto describes the circumstances of Maccalli's kidnapping in the video: "We didn't realize immediately what was happening. We thought the gunmen had taken Father Gigi to secure their escape and that they would let him go after a few kilometres, but that wasn't the case! Had it happened to me... I don't know... I don't know if I would have been able to cope, as a human being. The police promptly evacuated us from the missions and escorted us all to Niamey." "Considering these facts - Giroto continues - a thought comes to mind:](#)

**The Church speaks starting from her poverty. Niger is a country that requires a major effort of self-deprivation**

[often restricting our activity to a simple presence. This is an opportunity, a gift from God. In Niger we are made small, we are small." Permanent conversion. "Our presence in the Sahel requires seeking permanent missionary conversion, personally and as a community, to grow in the gratuitousness of God's mission. The mission in Niger is the mission of a nomadic God calling us to live a nomadic mission always on the move", says Fr Davide Camorani. For Father Carlos Bazzara, our presence in Niger "calls for a greater contemplative presence, whereby structures are reduced to a minimum; a presence that has the courage to risk and incarnate the historical Nazarene dream, leaving behind our limitations and vulnerabilities.](#)

**And insofar as it is a presence in poverty, it becomes permeable to sincere, profound and authentic dialogue with the Muslim world.**

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Unless we are men of prayer with a contemplative heart, the act of 'doing' becomes an excuse to avoid taking risks." "The future Church in Africa should be a Church that acknowledges her smallness, that is not afraid to be small and with poor means, with the courage to risk and to incarnate the dream infused by the Holy spirit into her soul." **All remaining hostages.** Father Maccalli concludes his interview recalling all those still held hostage: "seven people are still held hostage in the Sahel - across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger: Iulian Ghergut, Romanian, held hostage for almost 6 years; Sr Gloria Cecilia Narvaez Agoti, Colombian, with serious mental health problems, held hostage for 5 years; Dr Arthur Kenneth Elliott, an 84-year-old Australian physician, and Jeffrey Woodke, American, both taken hostage 4 years ago; Jörg Lange, German, Christo Bothma, South African, abducted 2 years ago. And finally Fr Joel Yougbaré from Burkina Faso, missing for a year and a half. I can only say: 'Lord, please help them and their families soon!'"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uaynbalmw3U&t=75s>

Gianni Borsa